

## Romer makes 'Whose Life' success

By Christopher Griffin  
For The Dispatch

### REVIEW

The next time you have a bad day at the office or life's daily trials seem to overwhelm you, just think what it would be like if you had absolutely no control over your existence.

Brian Clark's provocative drama, *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, in production at Otterbein College, confronts just such a predicament with intelligence, wit and compassion.

Consider Ken Harrison, a brilliant young sculptor who has ruptured his spinal chord in an automobile accident. Paralyzed from the neck down, Harrison can pursue none of the daily activities most people take for granted. Through the miracles of modern medicine he can be kept alive, but only in a hospital with constant care.

Harrison can do only one thing by himself: think.

**BECAUSE HE** can no longer live as he would choose, he

chooses to die. He can still make choices, or so one would assume.

However, Harrison must contend with a world of medicine determined to keep him alive against his will.

Caught in an intriguing battle of wills, Harrison fights for his choice: death with dignity rather than what he considers not living.

This topic is playwright Clark's battleground. Written with exquisite literacy, this articulate drama presents forceful arguments both for and against Harrison's choice.

The play's conflict culminates in an exciting makeshift courtroom scene (in Harrison's hospital room) in which a judgment must be made.

**THE OTTERBEIN** Summer Theater production, under the skilled guidance of Ed Vaughan,

provides an evening of unabashed sensitivity, humor and pathos.

Vaughan directed last summer's highly successful *The Elephant Man*, a play about resilience and one man's struggle for life with dignity.

With *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* we are presented with the flip side: the right to choose death with dignity.

The pursuit of this choice is the task of guest professional actor, Dennis Romer, as Ken Harrison. A 1971 graduate of Otterbein College, Romer carefully balances his character, providing caustic cynicism tempered with a sufficient dose of sensitivity.

This difficult role challenges an actor to sculpt a believable character using only voice and facial expression. As Harrison, Romer is bedridden on stage the entire length of the drama. The

success or failure of this play is dependant upon an outstanding

performer in this role. Romer provides just that.

**VAUGHAN ELICITS** other outstanding performances from Susan Diol and Brent Erdy.

As Dr. Scott, Harrison's attending physician, Diol locks horns with Dr. Emerson, consulting physician, played by Erdy. One of the best scenes in the play comes when these medical adversaries confront their conflicting opinions on Ken Harrison's choice.

*Whose Life Is It Anyway?* is an ultimately uplifting look at life. It examines the dishonesty of quiet desperation. It entertains as it challenges us to face moral questions many of us never consider. It is above all, an evening of intriguing theater.

**Whose Life Is It Anyway?** continues at 8:30 tonight through Saturday in the Otterbein College Campus Center. For tickets, call 890-3028.

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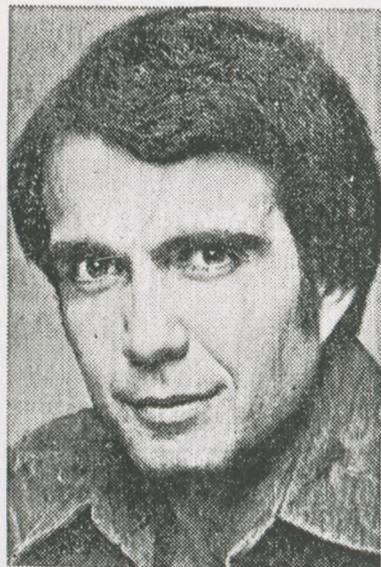
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