

A Trip To Bountiful

★★★★★ *Oaks Six East*

Mrs. Watts is an old woman with a tired, weak heart who is reaching the end of her days in the 1930s. She lives in Houston with her son, Ludie (John Heard) and his wife, Jessie May (Carlin Glynn). Her deepest desire is to return to Bountiful, the farming community where she grew up and reared a family.

Like Mrs. Watts (Geraldine Page), *Bountiful* is old, worn-out and all but abandoned; even the trains and buses don't stop there anymore. But she perseveres and, after outwitting her son and daughter-in-law who don't want her to make the perilous journey (it could strain her heart to the breaking point), Mrs. Watts visits her home.

It's a simple tale rich in character and meaning. A film like this will never reach a wide audience; but the people involved knew that, and they poured their heart into it anyway. That makes *A Trip To Bountiful* all the more endearing.

Thanks to the screenplay by Horton Foote, marvelous moments abound: the bus stop scene between Mrs. Watts and Thelma (Rebecca De Mornay) in which Mrs. Watts unabashedly breaks into a hymn; the bickering in Houston with Jessie May that is both funny and sad; and the scene in Bountiful where Mrs. Watts is quietly nostalgic, then suddenly bursts into tears for having outlived her family, friends, home and even the land.

The entire case is wonderful,

including Rebecca DeMornay (who's shown a lot of integrity in the roles she's chosen after her breakthrough in *Risky Business*), and John Heard, who is simply terrific as Ludie.

But it is Page who remains in your memory, and it's not only because she won an Oscar for best supporting actress. She's an outstanding character actress who has appeared in countless films including, most recently, *White Nights* and *The Pope of Greenwich Village*. Mrs. Watts is a rich, complicated character and Page does her justice. Her performance sums up not just her role's life, but *her* life and career as well, and it's something to treasure forever.

by Michael Giltz