

on theater/Te

By Tim O'Brien

The teenagers have changed from alligator shirts to poodle skirts, stepping back to a time when restaurants had drive-ins rather than drive-through windows, and high-water pants and bobby sox were the "in" things to wear.

What's going on? In a word, "Grease."

The Teen Theater of Port Washington is presenting the musical at 8:30 PM today through Monday at Weber Junior High School, Port Washington Boulevard. Tickets are \$2.

"Grease" is the twelfth show for the theater, which each summer presents a musical starring a cast of teenagers. This year 81 youngsters, ranging from 12 to 18, will appear. The original Broadway cast numbered 15, but Pam Meadows, the theater's director, said the larger cast is no problem.

"In the original, they were compensating and trying to give the impression of a school full of children. I have the advantage of several classrooms full of children."

The teen theater began when Meadows was working with The Play Troupe of Port Washington on a production of "Peter Pan" in 1970, and realized there weren't enough pirates for a dance routine.

"Rather than twisting the fathers' arms, I got a group of girls to dress up as pirates," she said.

The girls apparently enjoyed themselves because one of them, Kathy O'Connor, asked Meadows to organize a show the next summer. Meadows resisted, O'Connor persisted, and the teen theater was begun with a production of "Anything Goes."

O'Connor, now 25, recalled how she convinced Pam Meadows and her husband Ron, who serves as producer, to start the teen theater. "It's called haranguing someone to death," she said, laughing. O'Connor was motivated, she said, by "the utter fear of having nothing to do for the summer."

Most of the young actors and actresses who appear in the productions also consider it an enjoyable way to spend the summer. Although most say they want to appear in college plays, few will seek degrees in drama.

Comparisons to a class play are easy to find, but the age range is wider than in any school production. "I mix together children from any one of a number of grade schools and junior and senior high schools," Pam Meadows said. "It's a shock for the older teenagers to learn to deal with the 11-year-olds. And the younger ones learn they have a bunch of older brothers and sisters."

At first, most of the older teenagers said, they felt awkward about working with the smaller chil-