

THE ENCORE

VOLUME 17 NUMBER 1

October 2017

From the Desk of the Editor

Times, they are a changin' - and so is TAIG! One of the biggest changes is our president - Evan Smith ('11) is taking the helm as the new TAIG president.

Additionally, this will be my last newsletter as editor, so I'm pleased to introduce Sean Meadows ('13) who will be assuming the role. As always, feel free to email taig.newsletter@gmail.com with any comments or suggestions!

YFIT,

Eliza Altenderfer ('12)
 Communications Chair
taig.newsletter@gmail.com

Callboard

Liam Fennecken ('13) is on the first national tour of School of Rock in the the ensemble understudying Dewey. He would love to say hey to some Thespians across the nation!
<http://bit.ly/SoRtour>

Congratulations to Chuck Pierce ('09) and Kaitlin Boland Pierce ('10) on their marriage in April!

Congratulations to Jenna Fehr St. Clair ('09) who got married in May!

President's Corner

For the first time this decade, Guy Fissel ('77) is not writing this message. In the past seven years under Guy's leadership, our organization has seen immense growth and prosperity. We have almost completed a \$125,000 endowment (more on that below), started participating in the Homecoming Parade, and received Alumni Association awards as a Group of Distinction. While we didn't let him get too far (he's our new Secretary and maintained the role of Thespian Liaison), we all owe him an immense amount of gratitude for his service to TAIG. Thank you Guy!

I also want to thank Fred Leuschner ('50, '51g) and Andrea Schwander Fisher ('10) for their time and commitment to TAIG as they both leave our board.

The Drowsy Chaperone graces the Schwab stage October 12-14th. It is not too late to get tickets and come back to State College to see their hard work!

Reserve online: <http://bit.ly/thespiansChaperone> now!

Finally, the William E. McTurk Thespians Endowment for Excellent has reached \$107,805, or 86% of our goal. We are very close to completing the endowment and you can help! Please consider making a tax-deductible gift at <http://psuthespianaig.org/donate> or purchasing a Thespian Key or Floorboard at <http://psuthespianaig.org/shop> with all proceeds benefiting the Endowment.

Throughout this transition and beyond, I always welcome and look forward to hearing from all TAIG members. Please feel free to contact me anytime at taig.president97@gmail.com. I look forward to serving as your President.

Evan Smith ('11)
 TAIG President

Join Us in the Homecoming Parade on November 10

TAIG and the Thespians will be participating in the Homecoming Parade once more, but this year's parade is a bit different compared to previous years. It will take place after the fall production of *The Drowsy Chaperone*. We will showcase the best of what the club has to offer. The parade is on November 10th, and the report time will be around 4 pm. If you're interested in joining us in the parade, sign up by emailing taig.homecoming@gmail.com to receive more information.

We will be posting updates on social media so you can be a part of it from anywhere.

www.facebook.com/psuthespianaig
www.twitter.com/psuthespianaig



Alumni Profile: Sam Rudy

How does a kid raised on a dairy farm in Rebersburg, PA end up a top Broadway publicist who is the press agent for the phenomenon that is *Hamilton*? For Penn State Thespian Sam Rudy, it started when he was an 11-year-old trombonist in the Penns Valley High School band. They were chosen to represent Pennsylvania in the International Lion's Club parade in New York City. Marching on 5th Avenue, Sam was fascinated by the sights and sounds of the crowd and the city. He became enamored with the city and by the end of the trip, he knew he would spend important years of his life there.

Back at Penns Valley High School, Sam performed in some of the formula comedies which were typical of high school shows of the era. More importantly, Jerome Weinstein, then editor of the Centre Daily Times, started running occasional high school news pages submitted by teams from area school districts. Sam was head of the Penns Valley staff that contributed to the CDT student page and got a taste of journalism. So he entered Penn State as a journalism major and spent two years at the Altoona Campus as the first person on his Dad's side of the family to attend college.

At Altoona, he only took one journalism course but met Judy Katz, an English instructor and a great influence. Both later transferred to University Park where she encouraged Sam to sign up for the creative writing department that year. Judy and Sam are still friends. Along the way, Jerome Weinstein hired Sam to cover various beats in sports and meetings for the Centre Daily Times.

Then Sam Rudy and Thespians found each other. A good friend of his was a roommate of Nan Clingman, President of Penn State Thespians. Sam visited his friend and met Nan who convinced him that he would enjoy becoming active with the group. His first important staff

position was with *Fiddler On The Roof* in spring of 1974 directed by David Hochoy. Nan was Production Stage Manager and Sam served as Assistant Stage Manager. At this point, Nan's term as president was ending and she convinced Sam he was the best candidate to follow her. He served as Thespian president for the 1974-75 school year and got so involved with the group's activities that he cut back on his classes and had to take a second senior year. In the fall of 1974, he appeared in *Minnie's Boys* playing husband to Nan's "Minnie", and in spring 1975 he was Production Stage manager for *Camelot*. He enjoyed the camaraderie and fun along with the work. Sam received his BA with a major in English from Penn State in 1976.

Following that, he worked in public relations for the Penn State Summer Festival Theater at the Playhouse and Pavilion and performances such as Tammy Wynette at Eisenhower Auditorium. When he decided it was time to move to New York, Doug Cook of the theater department put him in touch with a colleague of press agent Shirley Herz. Sam called her and thought he had an appointment for a job interview the following Monday. Having bought a new suit, briefcase, and expensive haircut, he showed up at Shirley's office in New York at the appointed time. She took one look and asked why he was so dressed up. She then told Sam she'd hired him over the phone so he should go home, get dressed more casually and return ready to work! At one time Sam was Shirley's only employee and he had to hustle for business, but the company grew over the 20 years Sam worked for her. By 2002, Sam realized he had a stable of his own clients who paid him directly even while still working in Shirley's office. He started a corporation and now has his own office, Sam Rudy Media Relations, with a staff of five.

Over his 35 years in New York, Sam has

represented shows on and off Broadway including the original *La Cage Aux Folles*, *The Scottsboro Boys*, *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella*, *Sting's The Last Ship*, and *Avenue Q*. He has spent 25 years as a publicist for Vineyard Theatre where he worked with such celebrated writers as John Kander, Paula Vogel, and Edward Albee with whom he became great friends. He is often credited with reviving Albee's career with *The Goat, or who is Sylvia?* In 2016, Sam was honored at Vineyard Theatre's annual gala along with actress Kathleen Chalfant.

Vineyard's then executive director Jennifer Garvey-Blackwell stated "Sam Rudy is what we call a good old-fashioned press agent, a true gentleman of the theatre. Sam is respected in the New York theatre community because of his work and his smarts, but he is beloved because of his heart."

He also was honored with the 2017 Penn State English Department's Distinguished Alumni Award and was asked to speak to graduating seniors. He brought along one of the *Avenue Q* puppets, Princeton who wears a graduation cap, to help break the ice with a roomful of poets.

Asked about his favorite shows, Sam cites *La Cage*; all Brian Friel plays; *The Goat*; and Paula Vogel's plays *How I Learned to Drive*, and the recent *Indecent*. Add to these *Avenue Q* in which he says the audience members begin to believe the puppets are real, and *The Last Ship*, when he found it exciting to work on Sting's Broadway debut. Then, of course, there is *Hamilton* about which so much has been said and written, a great deal of it by Sam Rudy! It is now opening in other cities across the country and he is making sure it is well and properly promoted.

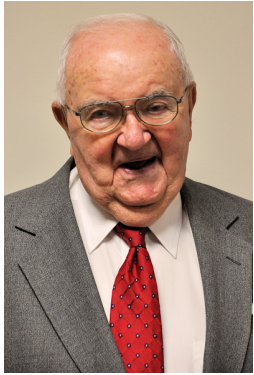
Asked for any advice to young people looking to work in the theatrical world; he replies, "Don't let any opportunity

pass you by. Take internships and starting positions in public relations or management offices because people move up and on. If you have the passion to live on pork and beans until you can better support yourself, go for it. Hang out around theaters when you're starting, it's good to be seen."

He had the dream when he was in 7th grade and he worked to make it come true in New York City. He's still Sam Rudy...proud Pennsylvanian, proud Penn Stater, proud Penn State Thespian!

Luanne Russel ('63)
TAIG Historian

A Sad Passing:



We mourn the passing of *Donald "Ned" Startzel ('41)*, who was 98, on August 29. Ned was a founding member of the Penn State Stooges who wrote musical shows for Thespians as well as performing in their own shows throughout Pennsylvania.

Ned started performing at the age of seven and was still performing even earlier this year in the troupe he co-founded in 2007, the Spectacular Senior Follies in Dallas, TX. The troupe puts on vaudeville follies-type shows with performers in the over-55 age group with great success. Ned has been profiled in *The Encore* (Fall 2010) and *The Penn Stater* (March/April 2010).

We also mourn the loss of:

Robert E. Manning ('48, '49 MS, '54) - Nov. 29, 2016
Kathrene Bitner LaBrie ('49) - Nov. 15, 2016
Rita Apter Rolter ('49) - June 13, 2016
Elaine Rosenbloom Felderman ('50) - Dec. 11, 2016
William Weiss ('51) - Oct. 10, 2016
Elizabeth A. Ives ('57) - Nov. 13, 2016
David W. Hallman ('64) - Jan. 2, 2017

News From the Actives:

Thespians is starting this year with a bang! *The Drowsy Chaperone*, directed by Julie Whelan ('18), is in full swing. Although typically played by a male actor, the lead role of "Man in Chair" will now be titled "Woman in Chair" and played by active member Lauren Weber ('18). The show's producer is Jenna Maida ('19) and technical director is Andrew Bean ('20). We would love to see as many alumni as possible at the show! Reserve tickets online: <http://bit.ly/thespiansChaperone>

The last THON canning weekend ever occurred September 22-24. Over the summer, our THON child, Theresa, had an array of CAT scans done. The doctors said her scans were clear! Theresa is certainly headed in the right direction. Our first THON child, Dylan, is doing great! The Ducketts moved to a new house in the spring and are having a great time there. They hosted a group of Thespians for this year's canning weekend as well.

If you would like to donate to Thespians THON, please visit: giveto.psu.edu/thon-pennstatethespians

Children's Show has been working tirelessly to prepare for the production of *Harold and the Purple Crayon*! The performance will take place in Schlow Library on December 2nd and 3rd.

TAIG Calendar

The Drowsy Chaperone

October 12-14, 2017

1:30 PM & 7:30 PM

Schwab Auditorium

Tix: <http://bit.ly/thespiansChaperone>

Post-Matinée Show Reception

October 14, 2017 - 4PM

Gallery Room

Schwab Auditorium

Fall Board Meeting

October 14, 2017

10:30 AM (EDT)

Location TBD

Homecoming Parade

November 10, 2017

Spring Awakening

March 22-24, 2018

Schwab Auditorium

Spring Board Meeting

March 24, 2018

10:00 AM (EDT)

Summer Board Meeting

July 14, 2018

11:00 AM (EDT)



Noelle Marchetti '18
Historian and Alumni Liaison
thespiansHAL@gmail.com

THESPIAN ALUMNI INTEREST GROUP

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Hintz Family Alumni Center
University Park, PA 16802

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Questions and comments regarding the content of this publication as well as suggestions for future articles may be directed to *Sean Meadows ('13)*, TAIG Newsletter Editor, at taig.newsletter@gmail.com.

Questions regarding TAIG may be directed to TAIG President *Evan Smith ('11)* at taig.president97@gmail.com.

2017-18 TAIG Board Members

Evan Smith '11, President
Jason Marko '16, Vice President
Guy W. Fissel '77, Secretary
Vince Roscioli '09, Treasurer
Luanne Russell '63, Historian
Sean Meadows '13
Eric Minford '76, '83(g)
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Amy Tizio '16
Ruth Yeaton '53, '59(g)



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Online Store!

Thespians Keys and Floorboard sales benefit the Endowment and can be purchased online at:
<http://psuthespianaig.org/shop>

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