

# THE ENCORE

VOLUME 8 NUMBER 1

WINTER, 2006

## William E. McTurk '48 (1925—2005) Actor, Mentor, Teacher, Activist, Friend... THESPIAN

All of these words have been used to characterize **Bill McTurk '48**, and the one of which he might be most proud was Penn State Thespian. From his undergraduate performing days until his death in May of last year, Bill was a Penn State Thespian, proud of it, and determined to help the organization continue and thrive.

Bill grew up in Pittsburgh, and he entered Penn State in the 1940's. Like many other talented students over the years, he worked as a disc jockey at WMAJ Radio to help pay his expenses. After a two-year break from school to serve in the US Army, Bill returned to campus and graduated in 1948 with a degree in chemical engineering. Somewhere in those years, Bill and Thespians discovered each other, and he began his life-long association with our organization.

**Ray Fortunato '47, '52(g)** was a student around the same time, and he mentions two Thespian programs that list Bill in the cast. Ray says Bill was usually a character actor, appearing in *No Kick Coming* (December 1946) as well as in several different scenes in *Varsity Sweetheart* (Spring 1947).

**Gene Sprague '49**, who played trumpet for numerous shows in the late 1940's, remembers Bill as a performer. In later years, Gene got to know Bill better through their involvement in the West-

chester County chapter of the Alumni Association in New York.

The most marvelous picture of Bill McTurk, however, comes from **Jim Dunaway '49**. When hearing of Bill's passing, he sent this remembrance of their college performing days.

"I knew him only as a Thespian. But what a comic actor he was! Slightly built, with reddish-blond hair and a ruddy Irish complexion, his command of the stage was absolute, his face a rubbery mask across which passed a succession of raised eyebrows, open-mouthed astonishment, deadpan stares, and exquisitely timed double-takes...all delivered with assurance and style. To be on stage (with a bit-part line or two) with Bill, Jim 'Mule' Mulholland and **Jimmy Ambandos '48** was so much fun I could barely keep from laughing, even though we'd rehearsed the same silly stuff every night for three weeks. A sample:

'Frankly, Doctor, I'm dubious...'

'Glad to know you, Mr. Dubious!'

Hey, when you can make people laugh with lines like that, you ARE funny. Bless us all, we had a damn good time."

After graduation, Bill was recruited by Exxon where he spent 34 years—as a chemical engineer, a manager in Brussels and Milan, and as a public affairs officer in New York. At the age of 56, he retired to Scarborough, New York with his wife Lois. But wherever he was, Bill McTurk maintained his ties to his beloved Penn State and the Penn State Thespians.

When the Thespian Alumni Interest Group was formed, Bill signed on to serve on the Board of Directors. Who could have foreseen the impact this man would have on TAIG, the undergraduate organization, and the students and alums with whom he

worked?

To the TAIG board, he was the first one who prodded the other members to do more than just attend three meetings a year. He started by looking for ways to



**Bill (center) & Lois McTurk pictured here with Dan Carter, Director of Penn State's School of Theater.**

raise funds for Thespians through designated alumni annual gifts. He offered suggestions on how to organize the board, and he was involved in every project undertaken in one way or another. And he loved being an active part of Thespians again!

In 1997, Bill and Lois moved to State College, close to their Dear Old State. This gave Bill the opportunity to bring his visions, dreams, and leadership directly to the Penn State Thespians. He began attending the Thespian meetings, observing everything that was going on and often reminiscing about his own days in the club. He was a tireless advocate for Thespians, going to bat for them in any way he could...with the administration, the Alumni Association, and the Center for the Performing Arts. He was always willing to lend a helping hand and did so wherever possible.

But Bill was always looking for more ways to help Thespians, to try to improve their

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# A Tribute to Bill McTurk

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resources. Perhaps his greatest legacy is the Thespian Alumni Gift Fund, which pools all of the alumni donations received by Thespians. This fund has allowed the organization to purchase equipment that would otherwise have been unaffordable. Over \$30,000 in equipment has been purchased for Thespians since the fund was established including tools and equipment for the Thespian workshop, wireless microphones, and a computer for the Thespian office in the HUB. It also made a major contribution toward the complete renovation of the lighting system in Schwab. Bill was instrumental in establishing this fund and insuring its continued vitality. He also served as a mentor to numerous Thespian student officers and their current faculty advisor **Gerald Henry '91**.

For everything he has done for and meant to Thespians, Bill McTurk was awarded the "Distinguished Service to the Penn State Thespians" award in 2004.

And Bill and Lois did even more...they made a \$400,000 pledge to Penn State to support scholarships and the performing arts. A part of this pledge will include \$100,000 to support Thespians' theatrical activities and \$50,000 to aid the Center for the Performing Arts.

Bill did have a few other interests, particularly golf. He was an Executive Committee member of the Metropolitan (NY) Golf Association. Lois was president of the Women's Metropolitan Golf Association and a member of the USGA Women's Committee. Both quickly accepted the WPGA's request to help at Penn State's Rutherford Invitational, where Bill served for many years as a starter.

This past year, Bill had announced he was ready to turn the reins of the TAIG presidency over to new blood. He planned to remain on the TAIG board and was looking forward to focusing on being a mentor to the TAIG and Thespian student officers, hoping to insure the continuation of the work he had begun.

He and Lois had celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary at the Greenbrier Resort in West Virginia and were on their way back to State College on May 12, 2005 when their car rolled over and Bill was killed. Lois survived the accident with

## TAIG Gift Fund Report

Seven years ago, **Bill McTurk '48** spearheaded the effort to establish the TAIG Gift Fund as a way for Thespian Alumni to "give back" to the organization that had such a profound influence on our lives. The response was nothing short of spectacular and the impact on the Thespian student organization is tangible and profound.

Through your generosity, over \$30,000 in equipment has been purchased for the Thespian club since 1999. Major items have included a computer for the Thespian office, pneumatic tools, a cyclorama curtain, new lighting instruments, wireless microphones, power tools, and a contribution towards the complete renovation of the lighting system in Schwab.

Now, the Gift Fund must continue without its chief steward and advocate. Bill's vision and determination created this fund and its continued existence will be one of his many lasting legacies.

If you have previously donated, we sincerely thank you—and so do the Penn State Thespians! Remember, 100% of your gift goes into the fund and each and every gift, no matter the size, has a positive impact on the Thespians.

To donate to the TAIG Gift Fund, simply designate Thespians to receive a portion of your annual gift to Penn State, or use the clip-out form on page 3.

**William A. Schwab '01**  
TAIG President  
was136@earthlink.net

minor injuries. Thespians had lost a vital force and a tireless advocate.

Within days, plans were underway for a permanent tribute to the man who gave so much of himself to Thespians. At Bill's Memorial Service in Schwab Auditorium last June, Thespians and TAIG were pleased to announce the creation of a new Thespian award in Bill's Memory "The William E. McTurk Award for Lifetime Service to the Penn State Thespians." It will be awarded posthumously to Thespian alumni who have given a lifetime of service, vision, and leadership to our organization, just like Bill did. The award will be represented by a plaque which will be prominently placed in the lobby of Schwab, and it will contain spaces to add the names of future recipients.

Every aspect of Bill's service to Thespians bespoke of his boundless energy and character, his passion and enthusiasm, qualities we are proud to see in Thespian members both on-stage and behind-the-scenes. He did not do things half-way, and expected others to follow his lead. It was an honor and privilege to know and work with Bill McTurk...he brought out the best in all of us. He is missed.

**Luanne M. Russell '63**  
lrussell@hearst.com

## President's Notes

The tragic death of **Bill McTurk '48** was something that profoundly impacted many Thespians. Bill was a driving force behind everything that TAIG did—his passion, energy, and determination were everywhere!

Despite the loss of our biggest advocate, your TAIG Board has been working hard to insure the future prosperity and vitality of Thespians—Bill would expect nothing less of us!

I am pleased to announce the following additions to the TAIG Board of Directors over the past year: **Sarah K. Arras '02**, **Fred Leuschner '50**, **Stacy L. Reck '88**, and, **Rebecca Reed '00**.

In the coming year, we plan to launch a formalized fundraising campaign for Thespians—**Pete Kiefer '56** and **Sarah K. Arras '02** have graciously agreed to co-chair this effort!

You'll also have a new newsletter editor—**Christyn Rossman '02** will take charge of our next issue.

And, of course, we will continue to host a pre-show reception for all returning alumni prior to the Saturday evening per-

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# THE ENCORE

**THE ENCORE** is a publication of the Penn State Thespian Alumni Interest Group (TAIG). Questions and comments regarding the content of this publication as well as suggestions for future articles may be sent to **William A. Schwab '01** at was136@earthlink.net or **Christyn Rossman '02** at christyn@psualum.com

Questions regarding TAIG may be sent to TAIG President **William A. Schwab '01** at was136@earthlink.net

## 2005 - 2006 TAIG Board Members

William A. Schwab '01, President (was136@earthlink.net)  
 Darren R. Ferlazzo '01, Vice Pres. (drf144@comcast.net)  
 Peter Kiefer '56, Treasurer (ptk1@psulias.psu.edu)  
 Anne Giedlinski '67, Secretary (Annethedre@aol.com)  
 Sarah K. Arras '02 (sak200@psu.edu)  
 Grace Holderman '34  
 Samantha E. Huckabee '01 (seh267@nyu.edu)  
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 Stacy L. Reck '88 (reckster@comcast.net)  
 Rebecca Reed '00 (becca267@hotmail.com)  
 Christyn Rossman '02 (christyn@psualum.com)  
 Luanne M. Russell '63 (lrussell@hearst.com)  
 Ruth Yeaton '53, '59(g) (ryeat11@yahoo.com)

## THESPIAN CONTRIBUTION FORM

Name		
Address		
City	State	ZIP Code
Phone	E-mail	Class Year
My gift of \$_____ is to benefit the Penn State Thespians.		
<input type="checkbox"/> My check is enclosed, payable to Penn State		
<input type="checkbox"/> Please charge my	<input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard	<input type="checkbox"/> Visa
	<input type="checkbox"/> Discover	<input type="checkbox"/> American Express
Account Number	Exp. Date	
Signature		
<input type="checkbox"/> My company's matching gift form is enclosed.		
<p><b>Please complete this form and mail to:</b> Kathy Kurtz          Office of Annual Giving          17 Old Main          University Park, PA 16802</p>		
<p><b>If you are interested in making your donation by Electronic Funds Transfer or by means of a multi-year pledge, please contact Kathy Kurtz at (888) 800-9163</b></p>		
XXTPT/AARETH		

## Thespians of the 1970's Reunite at Dear Old State

It was a spring weekend and the Penn State weather was cold and rainy. And for the Thespians of the early 1970's, meeting again for the first time in over 30 years, it was a warm welcome home. The school is larger and the faces younger, but some things remain the same. Stickies are still grilled, the obelisk still stands, and the Thespians still produce a spring musical!

The reunion started at the Atherton Hotel on Friday night. As people drifted into the hotel's bar and restaurant, old friendships were rekindled, past memories shared, and more than likely, a few stories embellished.

Saturday morning, we met at the Diner for grilled stickies. Now that place has changed! It's larger and it looks like someone actually cleans it from time to time.

After our stickie pig out, a few trepid souls did a tour of campus in the rain. First stop, Schwab, of course. Unfortunately, the doors were locked so we didn't go in. But, even standing outside, it brought back memories of how much of our time at Penn State was spent in this building. There were many times when

we actually slept in the aisles or in the loft. To many of us, it was our second home.

Then it was on to the Creamery. Thank goodness that was open! A couple of Peachy Paterno's later and we headed across the street to the Pavilion. Again, locked. We had a quiet moment there because of the history of the building and Kelly Yeaton. Kelly was instrumental in getting this former cow barn turned into a theatre. His wife, **Ruth Yeaton '53, '59 (g)**, was our Thespian advisor. A month before our reunion, Kelly passed away. Ruth attended the reunion and we hope that being amongst old friends made her burden easier.

Our final stop on the tour was the HUB and the Student Book Store. Is everything getting bigger at PSU?

Saturday night we attended the TAIG reception and had a great time meeting Thespians from other years. Then it was on to the show! We had a section set aside for us in the balcony next to a group of the current Thespians. It was great to see the show and watch the current Thespians' reactions to it.

Sunday morning we had a send off brunch at the Nittany Lion Inn. More stories were traded and deep, dark secrets exposed (as if there are any left). We took a vow never to wait another 30 years. So, we will be back in Spring, 2007. Come and join us!

For pictures past and present of the 1970's Thespians, go to [www.theolearys.com/thespians.htm](http://www.theolearys.com/thespians.htm)

**Tom O'Leary**  
 tom\_oleary@hotmail.com

### Spring 2006 Thespian Weekend

April 6, 7, 8, 2006  
 Footloose, Schwab Auditorium

April 8, 2006 (5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.)  
 TAIG Pre-Show Reception  
 Allen Street Grille

**More details will be sent via the TAIG e-mail LISTSERV.**

## THESPIAN ALUMNI INTEREST GROUP

Penn State Alumni Association  
Hintz Family Alumni Center  
University Park, PA 16802

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## President's Notes

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formance of each Thespian mainstage show.

I will never forget Bill McTurk. His spirit and grace touched all who knew him and he has enriched our lives forever.

**William A. Schwab '01**  
TAIG President  
was136@earthlink.net

## Help Fight Childhood Cancer—THON 2006

Thespians will once again participate in the Penn State Dance Marathon. The theme of THON 2006 is "Together We'll Prevail."

You can help Thespians reach their THON fundraising goal AND help children with cancer by making a donation to THON 2006 and crediting Thespians for the gift.

To donate, please visit  
<https://secure.ddar.psu.edu/Thon/>  
Once there, select "Penn State Thespians" from the drop-down labeled "Please give the

following organization credit for my gift."

If you have any questions or would prefer to make your credit card gift over the phone, please call the Penn State Office of Annual Giving at 1-888-800-9163.

### Obituaries

**Louis W. Doroshow '52**  
**Jayne A. Fitzmartin '68**  
**Warren H. Hinks '49**

## The Callboard

Thespian alums are always doing amazing things—and we LOVE telling you about it!!

If you would like to have something included in our next issue, please send an e-mail to **Christyn Rossman '02** at [christyn@psualum.com](mailto:christyn@psualum.com)

**J. Mark Danley '78**  
[jmdanley@comcast.net](mailto:jmdanley@comcast.net)

Mark is an alum of the Class of 1978, having performed in *South Pacific* (Spring 1976), *How to Succeed in Business ...* (Spring 1977), and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (Spring 1978) as well as ASM for *Her Fatal Beauty* (Fall 1977).

Mark left Portland, ME in 2002 where he had performed with the Mad Horse Theater Company in *The Ugly Man*, *12 Angry Men*, as well as *Love! Valour! Compassion!* In July, 2002, he moved to Albuquerque to teach Biology at TVI Community College and appeared in *Moon Over Buffalo* last year at the Adobe Theater. He also directed *The Lion in Winter* for Sol Arts Theater in Albuquerque and has assumed the duties of Chair of Biology at TVI.

He also adopted a son – Lucas Danley Shay.

**Jim Bull '61**  
[jimbull@gorge.net](mailto:jimbull@gorge.net)

Jim has been involved with CAST (Creative Attention Seeking Thespians) in Hood River, OR since retiring from the US Forest Service ten years ago. His involvement has been mostly back stage, but he has also appeared in several small roles and has even directed a show! He is currently serving as Board President.

After losing their leases at the end of 2003, CAST and the local co-op art gallery joined forces to create Columbia Center for the Arts and are in the midst of a \$1.3 million capital campaign to purchase and renovate a 10,000 Sq. Ft. building in downtown Hood River. So far, they have raised over \$1 million in cash and pledges, and by late fall, work will begin on the interior finishing touches for the gallery and 3/4 thrust, 125 seat theater. Grand Opening is scheduled for late next spring.

If any Thespian Alumnae are in the Hood River area, stop by and see Jim. He'd be glad to show off his new digs.

**Jim Jimirro '58**  
[jjimirro@yahoo.com](mailto:jjimirro@yahoo.com)

Jim recently sold his company, National

Lampoon, but will remain Chairman of the Board.

His new adventures will all be centered on the Great American Songbook, lecturing on this music around the world (maybe at Penn State), and becoming involved with CD catalogs, touring shows, as well as television and radio programming.

**Gillian Albinski '93**  
[gvalbinski@aol.com](mailto:gvalbinski@aol.com)

Gillian's first show was *Fiddler on the Roof* in 1986. She was in High School at the time and helped the Thespians with props for the show. She graduated in 1993, after working as a Stage Manager, Scenic Designer, and serving on many run crews in Schwab.

She now works in film, TV and print, working as a Prop Master, Art Director, Production Designer and Stylist. She is currently working with her husband to develop a radio series about musical theatre for public radio. Please visit [www.compactbroadway.com](http://www.compactbroadway.com) for more information.

This publication is available in alternative media on request. Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce.