

Western Ontario Drama League



**Awards Honourée
Biographies**

2016

Our region has had many dedicated people who with their commitment and efforts have furthered the growth of community theatre in Southwestern Ontario. Many of these are honoured tonight by having an award presented to winners in his/her name. So that we, who do not know the stories of these generous folks, can know a little about them, this booklet contains a brief biography of each person for whom a trophy is named.



Western Ontario Drama League Awards **Honourées' Biographies 2016**

Audrey Vale

Audrey Vale arrived in Galt in 1945. She had previously worked professionally in London, England, New Hampshire and Toronto. On joining Galt Little Theatre she worked in all aspects, including President. She appeared on stage in numerous productions, won 3 Best Actress Awards from W.O.D.L. in the 50's. Audrey passed away in 1974.

Eunice Taylor (2014)

Eunice was Past President and Lifetime Member of Theatre Sarnia. She was Head of Props and Stage Managed many shows. She also produced shows and was instrumental in bringing Richard Howard to direct "Dark of the Moon" in 1989 for Sarnia Little Theatre. She cherished her family and friends and was always ready to throw another potato in the pot and get the spare bed ready for anyone. A true, stiff upper lip Brit, gracious, witty and a realist to the end, Eunice will be dearly missed by her family.

Carol O'Grady (2015)

Carol was a Lifetime Member and past Board Member of Theatre Sarnia. She played an instrumental role on the committee to obtain the Capital Theatre during the 1990's, that is now Theatre Sarnia's Imperial Theatre. She worked as Confidential Secretary to the Research and Development Manager of Fiberglas Canada, Owens Corning Canada and General Manager of Lehder Environmental Services. Carol was an avid theatre goer, loved to sing and spend time with family and friends. She was much loved and will be sorely missed.

Peggie Coslett (2015)

Peggie was born in England and immigrated to Canada with her husband Peter in 1951. She was a very accomplished actress and director for both Theatre Sarnia and Burlington Little Theatre. She was a founding member of the Burlington Little Theatre, and Lifetime Member of the Sarnia Little Theatre. Peggie will be sadly missed.

Peg Petley (2015)

Born in England, Peg immigrated to Canada in 1955 with her soulmate, Pete Petley. She was an active member of the Sarnia Little Theatre. She was a Producer for a number of Sarnia Little Theatre productions, she had the ability to hold the production team departments heads to their budgets, to be creative and find a way to make it work. Peg loved all the arts and enjoyed dancing and singing. Her family best remembers her love of gardening, exuberant enjoyment and love of life, sparkling smile and elegant sense of style. Peg will be sadly missed.

Steve Repuski

Steve Repuski was born in Brantford in 1930. His involvement with community theatre began in his teen years with Brantford Drama League, then later with Theatre Kent when he and Liz moved to Chatham in 1972. He was a fine Director and good actor especially in character parts. For many years he served as Adjudications Chair on the WODL Board of Directors. Festival audiences over the years looked forward to seeing Steve and the beautiful vests he would wear while introducing the various Festival Adjudicators for Public Adjudications.

Sadly he passed away in May of 2012. His gentle manner and quiet wit will be missed by everyone who knew him.

Inez Hayes

Inez Hayes moved to southern Ontario in the early 80's and quickly joined and became an active member of Theatre Burlington. Inez was one of the hardest working and favourite of our volunteers. Starting as an Assistant Stage Mgr., she painted sets, did properties, sourced out furniture, acted and at the same time she was Treasurer for the group. Inez was a Life member of Theatre Burlington. Also during this time Inez was the treasurer for the umbrella organization of theatre the Western Ontario Drama League from 1991 - 2003, for her work here she was also made a Life Member of that organization.

Inez had a shelf full of awards from "Thank You's" for help to 'Best Costumes'. Yes, another passion she developed was Costumes, especially for the annual children's play, although she really didn't sew much she created wonderful fun costumes.

For close to 30 years, we loved having her around, for she was a lot of fun too. Her lasting legacy may well be the incredible job she did in the past year of her life organizing the three rooms of costumes at Theatre Burlington. As anyone that works in this area will know, a monumental task. Inez passed away October 2012. Sadly missed.

Val Hadley

Feb. 1, 1933-Sept. 21, 2013

Val was born at a very early age. She and Fred moved to Canada in '57 and joined the Sarnia Drama League in '58. Actor, director, mentor, and major support for many, many people, and she never missed an audition or show. She was on the board of directors for Theatre Sarnia for many years, acting as secretary, newsletter editor, and president at various times. She served on the WODL board as mini-fest chair for 18 years, and was an honorary life member of both groups.

She received many acting and directing awards, including the Brickenden Award, and the Michael Spence Award for her contributions to the theatre community.

She has been on the Sarnia Mayor's Honours List twice for her contributions to the theatre and the city.

She was truly a leading lady in every way and she is loved and missed by all who knew her.

Fred Hadley

Fred Hadley was born in Birmingham, UK to Chaz and Florence Hadley June 17 1924. He married Valerie Smith, March 17 1955 and they immigrated to Canada in 1957. Fred and Val joined the Sarnia Drama league in 1957. Fred won a myriad of awards and nominations for stage management, lights and sound. He was happiest working backstage and would tinker away at things when no one else was around, creating the magic that was never noticed by most people. He had to make sure the lighting was perfect, as no actor could be trusted to find their light.

He was on stage only three times in his theatre career. Once, as part of the tech crew in 'The Man Who Came to Dinner', to set up the live radio broadcast... he needed to be there to connect it up...as no actor could be trusted to do it correctly.

Fred was a member of the board of WODL for many years and he served as President and Vice for the Theatre Sarnia Board. He was an Honorary Life member of both groups.

Fred didn't believe in an afterlife, but he lives on in everything around us. If his spirit did come back... it would be in the form of a fire fly...lighting up the world.

Christopher B. Covert

1948 – 1990

Christopher Covert was born and raised in Albany, New York. He came to Canada to pursue graduate studies at McGill University, but the lure of theatre was too strong to ignore. He began his theatre career as an actor and director with Twenty-fifth Street Theatre in Saskatoon in 1974, and over subsequent years, he worked in theatres across Canada and the United States. As well as freelance assignments, he held appointments as Intern Director at the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis and Assistant Director at the Stratford Festival in Ontario.

An accomplished musical theatre writer in addition to his other talents, Mr. Covert wrote three full-length musicals which have been produced in Toronto, Victoria, Minneapolis and Stratford. His first musical, “Colette – The Colours of Love” won a DORA award in 1980.

In addition, Mr. Covert was President of the Guild of Canadian Musical Theatre Writers and a senior member of the Lehman Engel–BMI Music Theatre Workshop in New York City. Mr. Covert taught acting and directing for Theatre Ontario Summer Courses and for the last few years of his life, was Head of the Acting Discipline in the Music Theatre Department at Sheridan College in Oakville. He directed several shows at Sheridan, and the impact of his innovative contributions to the Music Theatre Department is still felt today.

As an adjudicator, he twice judged at the regional level of The Sears Festival. He served as both the Preliminary and In-festival Adjudicator for the Western Ontario Drama League, as well as adjudicating for the ACT-CO Festival on two occasions.

Molly Yearham

Molly Yearham was a performer in the Hamilton area for more than 25 years. She specialized in tough, gritty, dramatic roles such as in “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”, “The Lion in Winter”, “The Killing of Sister George”, “Dylan”, “Painted Churches”. Molly also played comedy roles, “Steel Magnolias”, “Harvey” to name but two. Then there were all the musicals she starred in, “Oliver”, “Hello Dolly”. Molly was marvelous to work with, no pretensions, no airs or graces, she always gave, and that’s what an actor needs on stage. She had a great sense of humour. “When Molly laughed, the whole world laughed with her.” Molly battled cancer for 18 years but during chemotherapy treatments in hospital would organize “sing song” sessions on the ward.

She won her Best Actress Award for her role as the vulnerable wife of a man suffering from Alzheimer’s Disease in “Painted Churches” in 1991. At that time she said, “I waited all my life to do a part like that.”

Molly passed away in April 1993.

WODL Harmony Award 2016

By Marion Smith

The WODL Harmony Award was created to applaud more than 83 years of excellent amateur theatre united by the Western Ontario Drama League. To give a standing ovation to the thousands of thespians who have made theatre life possible. To honour 84 years of Harmony and friendship our theatre world brings to us.

Catharine Brickenden

The award for Best Production of a Canadian Play (in or out of festival) is appropriately named for Catharine McCormick Brickenden. Brickenden was invited to attend the inaugural meeting of the Dominion Drama Festival in 1932, where she met its chief organizers – Vincent Massey and Governor General Lord Bessborough. She set about organizing the first WODL Festival in 1933, held in the auditorium of the London Life Building in London Ontario. In 1934, she arranged for the use of the Grand Theatre in London for the second WODL Festival.

In 1936 Catharine Brickenden directed and acted in *Twenty-Five Cents*, the first original play to win the WODL and DDF festivals. In her memoirs she wrote:

“... the most gratifying triumph was that it was the first Canadian-written play in any Festival. The whole audience went wild.”

Anne Wilson

April 2014

Theatre throughout Ontario lost a great champion of live theatre with the passing of Anne Wilson. Anne became a valuable member of Woodstock Little Theatre, now known as Theatre Woodstock. In the early 60's she was president for two terms and in the mid '90's chaired the committee that negotiated The Market into the new home for the group. Anne stage managed many memorable shows that went onto festivals. She was rarely seen on stage, but her role as Nurse Ratchet in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was her most notable.

Anne held numerous positions over the years on the WODL Board: Adjudications Chair, Awards Chair and President of WODL for two terms 1980-82. Many still remember the “Excuse me” – pause she would hold until she had everyone's attention; then she would give her usually well thought out summation of the problem on hand.

A 40-year member of Theatre Ontario, she represented the WODL Board in the early 1980's. In 1984 she was V.P. of Community Theatre; in 1988 – 1990 she chaired the Theatre Ontario Board. In 1997 Anne was awarded Theatre Ontario's Michael Spence Award. In 2000 she was made an Honorary Life

President of WODL. Anne never missed a WODL or TO festival, and was absent from very few board meetings in all those years until she was forced to retire, due to failing health.

Woodstock is pleased to honour our 'Anne with an e' with this award.

Gary Chapman

April 12, 1949 ~ October 8, 2014

Gary Edward Chapman was born in Cardiff, South Wales and came to Canada, settling in Edmonton in 1977. He moved to Guelph in 1984, and joined Guelph Little Theatre and Royal City Musical Productions. In 1993 he produced *Noises Off* for GLT and won the WODL Outstanding Technical Achievement Award that year.

But being onstage was his passion, starting in rock bands as a teen, and into his adult life. He was active in all aspects of community theatre and was very much involved onstage, backstage and at the Board level with GLT and RCMPI. He stage managed regularly for local dance academies at the River Run Center where he also worked as Technical Director after his retirement.

Together with his wife Lin, Gary was Festival Stage Manager for the 2013 WODL Festival in Guelph. Their duties included selecting the winner of the Best Co-ordinated Production Award. In 2007, Gary had won that same award (along with another Outstanding Technical Achievement Award) for his work on *Death of a Salesman*.

Harold P. Sellers

Harold P. Sellers was one of the founding members of Burlington Little Theatre in 1953 along with his friends, Peter and Peggy Coslett. Over a period of thirty years he contributed his talents in many ways, on-stage, back-stage and many other ways.

He had two areas of specific expertise, which he freely made available: his vocational skills as a highly qualified accountant and partner in the accounting firm of Thorne Riddell in Toronto where he handled the Stelco account.

His chosen hobbies were boating in the summer and theatre during the winter where he was one of the leading lighting men in the area. He served the group as President and Treasurer for many years.

He was also known to bring in a portable T.V. to keep tabs on the current football score. The local Hamilton Tiger Cats were at their prime in those days. He served as a member of the Building Committee for the Drama Centre in Burlington, which was built in 1970. He was made an Honorary Life President of Burlington Little Theatre and took a keen interest in the group until his passing in December of 1981.

Pat and Vince Mathewson

By Lyn Mathewson

Pat and Vince Mathewson were my parents. They were involved in Theatre before I was born. My parents were one of the founding members of Owen Sound Little Theatre. My Dad directed Owen Sound's first production of "My three Angels." My parents lived and breathed little theatre. They were active participants in all levels, OSLT, WODL and Theatre Ontario. They hosted more parties than I can count.

My Dad was so proud to have been honored the Michael Spence 30th Anniversary Award for contributions made to theatre in Ontario prior to his death. If you had known them you would have loved them. I am one of six children who were inspired by their love of theatre.

Remembering Terry Doyle

By Rosalind Slater

It is with great sadness that we heard of the death of Terry Doyle on June 3rd, 2005. He died as he had lived: on stage, delighting his audience. Terry Doyle was a veteran of Guelph Little Theatre, referring to it as his "launching pad." He spent about thirty years of his early acting career on the stage at GLT. His debut was in 1956 in "Arsenic and Old Lace". He went on to play copious roles in many plays, including "My Sister Eileen", "Harvey", "The Odd Couple", "Prisoner Of Second Avenue" and the opening show in our first permanent theatre home at Dublin and Paisley, "The Broken Jug." Terry went into professional theatre when he took early retirement from his own business, a personnel agency. He acted regularly in Drayton and P.E.I., playing his favourite role, that of Matthew in "Anne of Green Gables," many times. He also played Belle's Father in "Beauty and the Beast" in Toronto and in London, UK.

Five minutes before he died he was given an enthusiastic ovation by the opening night audience as he made his first entrance on stage in Grand Bend, a rare tribute and one richly deserved.

He was a dear friend and colleague and will be sadly missed by everyone, especially the theatre community and his loyal audiences.

Kay McKie

Born in Owen Sound and educated at McMaster University and Harvard, Catherine (Kay) McKie was a member of the Guelph Little Theatre in the 1950s and 1960s, working as an actor and director. During the 1970s she was active as a director and board member of the Road Show Theatre in Guelph. Kay became a teacher at John F. Ross Collegiate-Vocational Institute, establishing the drama program at that school and becoming very active in the Sears Ontario Drama Festival. Often described as “modest” or “unassuming”, she still made an extraordinary impact to aspiring theatre artists, students, teachers, and community leaders over five decades and there are many professional artists who credit Kay’s influence in their early development. She was one of the founders of Royal City Musical Productions and directed the official opening production at the River Run Centre.

In 1982, Kay became a member of the Theatre Ontario Talent Bank as an adjudicator and director. In 1999, she was presented with Theatre Ontario’s Maggie Bassett Award for a sustained and significant contribution to the development of theatre in Ontario.

Anna Graham

May 15th, 1973 ~ November 8th, 2007

Life is awful and awe filled. On November 8th, 2007, Anna Graham was tragically killed by a drunk driver. passing, was a Production Coordinator with the Canadian Opera Company. She was a brilliant technician who freely gave her expertise to all who needed it. Many have had the privilege of learning from Anna and many have enjoyed the fruits of her passion.

Lloyd and Carol Lindsay brought their niece Anna into their home when she was a young teenager and raised her as one of three daughters. She developed into a fine young woman, full of inner strength, energy, a love for life and creative potential.

Having earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Drama from the University of Guelph, where there is now a Technical Theatre Scholarship in her honour, she is remembered as one who relished the performing arts with talents extending from arts design work to management and technical direction.

Numerous WODL Festival productions presented by Guelph Little Theatre benefitted from her expertise, energy and enthusiasm.

David Park Jamieson

In 1927, D. Park Jamieson was a founding member of the **Sarnia Drama League**. This quiet, but extremely efficient man, throughout his adult life had an enthusiasm for the theatre. He remained a bachelor and although he was a successful lawyer most of his energies seemed to be channeled into theatre.

During his early years he left no stone unturned for the cause of theatre. All around him were pressed into working for the cause of amateur theatre. He funded so many theatrical efforts that colleagues asked if he had an oil well. As Sarnia area land is still producing oil, it might have been.

When Vincent Massey and Col. Henry Osbourne were working on organizing regions for the **Dominion Drama Festival**, it was reported that Western Ontario earned a gold star from the beginning. D. Park Jamieson (the dapper little man with the red carnation) was summoning little theatre groups to London, Ontario to form a **Western Ontario Drama League**. “*Great activity under Jamieson in Western Ontario*,” enthused Osbourne in progress reports, December 1932.”

