

COUNTY PLAYERS HISTORY

1957/58-1997/98

by [*Rachel Cassidy*](#)

flk/a Rae Friedenberg

[Ed. Note: As most current members of County Players were either

non-born or were babies when this history begins,

we offer elucidation about some of the names mentioned herein,

upon request to the author.]

And in the beginning, after kicking the idea around during the late months of 1957, in February, 1958, in Wappingers Falls, Dutchess County, New York, John T. Sloper, founder of the Sloper-Willen Ambulance Service, conscientious objector in World War II who served as a medic rather than a fighter, former stage manager for Mae West and Katherine Cornell, decides to advertise in the local newspaper for persons interested in forming a community theatre company.

Several people respond. A meeting is held, County Players is born and a Board of Directors is chosen: Peter Edman, Pat Greer, Dorothy Feldman, Art Weinberg, Dr. William Abruzzi, Kurt Eisler, John Fitzgerald, Peg Kanter, Charlotte Lyon, James Russell, Henry Taylor, and, of course, John Sloper.

In 1957, Dwight D. Eisenhower was president. President Bill Clinton was 11 years old. The U.S.S.R. launched Sputnik I and II, the first earth satellites. Sir Laurence Olivier received an honorary doctorate from Oxford University. Ketti Fring wrote "Look Homeward, Angel". Eugene O'Neill posthumously received the Pulitzer Prize for "Long Day's Journey Into Night". Gore Vidal wrote "A Visit to a Small Planet". Dr. Seuss wrote "A Cat in the Hat". "West Side Story" and "The Music Man" opened in New York.

In May, 1958, Peter Edman directs the new company's first show: "Bell, Book, and Candle", with Peg Kanter, John Fitzgerald, Charlotte Lyon, John Collins, Sidney Gazen and Cynder (a 2-1/2 year old Maltese cat foundling). Mrs. E. B. Howell, in our first review says, "A hearty welcome to the Dutchess County Players. This group proved its merit in every respect with the initial production.... I sincerely hope this is the start of a long and successful career."

In 1958, Nelson A. Rockefeller was elected governor of New York. Leon Uris's "Exodus" was published, as were "A Raisin in the Sun", "Sunrise at Campobello", "Only in America" and "Dr. Zhivago". Van Cliburn won the Moscow Tchaikovsky piano competition. The Cha-Cha arrived. "Flower Drum Song" opened. Stereophonic recordings came onto the market. NASA was established. The Guggenheim Museum opened in New York City.

In 1959, While the dream of County Players owning a theatre is hardly even acknowledged, we perform at the rented auditorium of the Wappingers Junior High School, requiring us to build the set on the weekend prior to opening, and to strike the set each night until the Friday night opening, as the auditorium is used during the week by the school. County Players' first full season, 1958-1959, is "Laura", "The Glass Menagerie" and "Born Yesterday". A large membership with more than 100 patrons is established. "Laura" marks the debuts of two of County Players' most durable and talented actors - Bernice Edman and Hank Taylor. !

In 1959, Charles DeGaulle was proclaimed President of France. John Foster Dulles and George C. Marshall died. "The Miracle Worker" and "Toys in the Attic" opened in NYC. Ethel Barrymore died. Anti-Semitism flared in Cologne, Germany. Frank Lloyd Wright and Cecil B. DeMille died. "The Sound of Music" and "Gypsy" were written. The USSR launched a rocket with two monkeys aboard. The first U.S. nuclear powered submarine, "Savannah", was launched. The U.S. total of auto accident deaths, 1.25 million, exceeded deaths in all U.S. wars combined. U.S. Postmaster banned "Lady Chatterly's Lover" from the mails; the ruling was reversed in 1960.

In 1960, County Players produce it's first musical - "Finian's Rainbow", Peg Kanter directs and Peter Edman is featured. More than 1,000 people attend one showing. County Players continues to build its reputation for fine community theatre and more and more people participate.

In 1960, John F. Kennedy was elected President. John Updike published "Rabbit, Run." Authors Boris Pasternak and Richard Wright died. "The Apartment" won the Academy Award. Clark Gable and Mack Sennett died. Popular songs were "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Polka Dot Bikini", "Let's Do the Twist" and "Never on Sunday". U.S. scientists developed the laser (Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation). The American Heart Association attributed higher death rates among middle-aged men to smoking cigarettes. "Oliver!" opened in New York.

In 1961, County Players is able to produce "Romanoff and Juliet", "Devil's Disciple" and "Guys and Dolls", proof of the increased sophistication and expertise the company is drawing. The public is beginning to see County Players as an established theatrical fixture.

In 1961, Cuban exiled rebels attempted an unsuccessful invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. Berlin Wall was constructed. Kennedy and Kruschev met in Vienna to discuss disarmament. Ten-term Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn, Dashiell Hammett, George S. Kaufman and James Thurber died. "The Carpetbaggers", "Stranger in a Strange Land" and "Catch-22" were published. Moscow synagogues were shut down. "West Side Story" won the Academy Award. The Orient Express train was discontinued. "Freedom Riders", white and black, organized to test segregation, were attacked and beaten in Alabama.

In 1962, by the Fall, in addition to our regular performances, County Players is branching out to the community at large. John Sloper directs a production of "The Children are Listening", a piece dedicated to brotherhood, the eradication of prejudice, while promulgating the hope that the next generation will be kinder, more accepting of others and less bigoted. The play is "taken on the road" to Vassar College, Bennett College (formerly operating in Millbrook), and for a PTA conference of 1,500 delegates at Grossinger's Hotel. This marks County Players' entry into the mainstream of community endeavor.

In 1962, Adolf Eichmann was hanged. Linus Pauling won the Nobel Peace Prize. Edward Albee published "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf". e.e. cummings died. "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest", "The Night of the Iguana", "Fail-Safe" were published. "A Man For All Seasons" premiered in NYC. Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" hit the streets. The Nobel Prize for Medicine and Physiology went to Crick, Wilkins and Watson for determining the molecular structure of DNA. "Lawrence of Arabia" won the Academy Award. Marilyn Monroe was found dead. "The Crucible" won the Pulitzer Prize. "Blowin' in the Wind" and "Days of Wine and Roses" were top pop tunes. The Yankees won the World Series.

In 1963-1964, County Players launches the High School Drama Awards program, from which we are still drawing talent. For many years, knowledgeable County Players members form a committee of judges which go to the productions of the high schools in and around Dutchess County, to select those deemed "most talented" in various areas of production, artistic and technical. Each June, we hold a posh dinner at which time the awards are presented to the winners. Schools are invited to perform scenes from their nominated plays, and the kids and we dress up and have a wonderful time! County Players initiates a search for one-act plays, not previously published or produced, from local playwrights. Diane Kallerman directs our premiere showing, "Through Picture Windows", a series of three one-acts written by Arnold Sable, then the Librarian for the Adriance Library, a post now held by another County Players' member, Tom

Lawrence. This program continues for several years, a highlight of which was Ms. Kallerman's own one-act, "West Side Lament", which is adjudged Best Short Play at the New York State Community Theatre Association's Regional Festival.

In 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated. Zazu Pitts, Clifford Odets and Adolphe Menjou died. The Mona Lisa toured NYS and Washington, D.C. "Tom Jones" won the Academy Award. The "Mona Lisa" was displayed in New York City and Washington, D.C. Joan Baez and Bob Dylan were the top pop musicians. An earthquake in Yugoslavia killed 1,100. Dr. Michael De Bakey first used an artificial heart. A hurricane and tidal waves killed about 22,000 in East Pakistan, and a hurricane killed an estimated 4,000 in Cuba and Haiti. Lee Harvey Oswald was shot and killed by Jack Ruby as America watched on TV.

From 1964 to 1967, County Players continues to improve its capabilities and as Dutchess County grows, has more people in the community from which to draw talent. More and more sophisticated theatre is being produced. Inevitably, more conversations about a home of our own are being heard. Inquiries about possible properties to buy are being made. Dreams are being solidified. But fruition is more than a decade away.

In 1964, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. won the Nobel Peace Prize. "Hello, Dolly" and "Fiddler on the Roof" opened on Broadway. The Verrazano-Narrows Bridge opened. Elizabeth Taylor divorced Eddie Fisher and married Richard Burton for the first time. Peter Lorre died. In 1965, students demonstrated against U.S. bombing of Hanoi. Medicare became law. Adlai Stevenson died. Selma, Alabama, happened. "The Subject was Roses" won the Pulitzer Prize. "Unsafe at Any Speed" made Ralph Nader famous. "The Sound of Music" won the Academy Award. "A Hard Day's Night" topped the pop charts. Nat "King" Cole and Edward R. Murrow died.

In 1966, mini-skirts came into fashion. Color TV became popular. Albee's "A Delicate Balance" was published. "Virginia Woolf" won the Academy Award. Walt Disney died. "Man of La Mancha" opened in NY. In 1967, Israel won the "Six-Day War". American Nazi Party leader Rockwell was shot to death. "Rosemary's Baby", "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead", "The Price", "The Confessions of Nat Turner" appeared in print. Cardinal Spellman died. Jayne Mansfield died. "Cabaret" opened in NYC. 12 billion cans of beer and 5.3 billion cans of soft drink were consumed in the U.S. Dr. Christiaan Barnard performed the world's first heart transplant.

The 1968 season culminates with a major breakthrough - a sold-out house for "Camelot" at the Wappingers Junior High School which necessitates the addition of a Sunday matinee. By this time, County Players is an established theatrical entity in the Hudson Valley, commanding critical respect and starting to draw talent and audiences from ever-widening circles. There are no plays too difficult to attempt, and the success rate astounds even the most optimistic among the company. Rapidly outgrowing the strictures of the Junior High School, talk begins again about creating a permanent theatre residence. The cash box is starting to show a healthy balance after each show, permitting greater technical latitude in productions. The audiences repays the efforts with increased attendance. The High School Drama Awards program is in full swing. More and more new people are being drawn to County Players, on both sides of the footlights. It is a high time for County Players.

But the outside world was a different matter. In 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, was gunned down. Senator Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles. The Democratic Convention in Chicago saw riots and police brutality. Helen Keller died. The U.S. exploded an experimental hydrogen bomb 100 miles from Las Vegas. The foundations of the Temple of Herod, destroyed in 70 A.D., were discovered. Twelve thousand people died in an earthquake in Iran. Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy married Aristotle Onassis. "Hey, Jude", "Mrs. Robinson", "Stoned Soul Picnic" were at the top of the charts. Mickey Mouse turned 40.

June, 1969, sees County Players actively and openly campaign for its own "Theatre Home". Optimistic plans include a scene shop, a rehearsal hall, and, eventually, our own building!

Also in 1969, Dwight D. Eisenhower died. Philip Roth's "Portnoy's Complaint" appeared, as did "Oh! Calcutta!", and Norman Mailer won the Pulitzer Prize for "Armies of the Night". The Woodstock "Music and Art Fair" stormed into Bethel, NY, in August. "Midnight Cowboy" won the Academy Award. Neil Armstrong took man's first step onto the moon. The Mets won the World Series. The Manson murders were discovered.

October, 1970, John Sloper donates two acres of his land on MacFarland Road in the Town of Wappinger to County Players. Roy Berenotto and James Hart co-chair the County Players Building Committee, and ground is broken for the new Scene Shop. More than 30 people work on and off for a year, and several local businessmen donate time and material. By September, 1971, it is completed in time to use for building the sets of "Cactus Flower"! The Dream is becoming a reality.

In 1970, anti-Vietnam War demonstrations led to the killing of four students at Kent State University. Gypsy Rose Lee died. "Company" and "Applause" appeared on Broadway. The first synthesis of a gene was announced. There were 231,000,000 TV sets in use in the world.

In 1971, we continue to spark interest the community in theatre, from both sides of the footlights. We host a production of "North Star Shining" by the East River Players, as a bonus production. Our first "Man of La Mancha" is staged.

Meanwhile, in 1971, cigarette ads were banned from TV. The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts opened in Washington, D.C. "Patton" was Hollywood's Best Picture. OTB came to NY. Charles Manson was found guilty of murdering Sharon Tate. "Fiddler on the Roof" becomes the longest running musical in Broadway history. Igor Stravinsky died. The first of the "Pentagon Papers" appear in The New York Times. Fillmores East and West, hippie meccas, were closed.

In 1972, we continue our High School Theatre Awards program and our plans for the future, as our theatrical successes continue.

In 1972, Richard M. Nixon won again in a landslide. Watergate burst. Gov. George C. Wallace of Alabama, was shot and paralyzed. J. Edgar Hoover, longtime director of the FBI, died. The Duke of Windsor, former King Edward VII of England, died. Harry S. Truman, 33rd President, died. Michelangelo's Pieta was damaged by a vandal. Jackie Robinson, "Hopalong" Cassidy, Ezra Pound, Oscar Levant, Maurice Chevalier, George Sanders, Dame Margaret Rutherford died. "Fiddler" closed after 3,242 performances. "The French Connection" was Best Picture. Richard Leakey discovered a 2.5 million-year-old human skull in Kenya. "Life" magazine folds.

In June, 1973, we optimistically purchase an 80' diameter, 12-sided building from the 1965 World's Fair, which is planned for a rehearsal hall. However, because of the later purchase of the Theatre, the project is abandoned and the dismantled building was sold. However, our plays continue to draw increasingly large audiences.

In 1973, "The Godfather" won the Academy Award. "Deep Throat" was adjudged "indisputably and irredeemably obscene". "Last Tango in Paris" opened to critical acclaim. "Secretariat" won horse-racing's Triple Crown. Vice-president Spiro T. Agnew resigned. Cease-fire agreement signed in January, ending the Vietnam War; 45,948 U.S. dead, 303,640 wounded; Vietcong and N. Vietnamese combat deaths - 937,562, civilians killed - 415,000. Noel Coward, William Inge, Betty Grable, Gene Krupa, Edward G. Robinson died. O. J. Simpson set one-year rushing mark of 2,003 yards. Pablo Picasso died. A Soviet space craft landed on Venus.

From 1974 to 1976, among other things, we tap the talents of many members and reach out to the community, beginning a series of workshops - make-up, scenic design, costume design and lighting. The Company is planting more seeds for future harvest. And for the next three years, we continue to give first

class entertainment with three productions a year. And the coffers are filling slowly in anticipation of our next Purchase.

In 1974, President Richard M. Nixon resigned. Jack Benny died. "The Sting" was the Best Picture. Samuel Goldwyn, Agnes Moorehead, Katharine Cornell, Mama Cass Elliot, Duke Ellington, Charles A. Lindbergh, Jack Benny died. Skylab spent 84 days in space. Gasoline shortages plagued the U.S. Henry Aaron beats Babe Ruth's record of 714 career homeruns. The world's population reaches 3.782 billion. Drought induced famine threatens millions in Africa.

In 1975, "A Chorus Line" was named best musical by New York Drama Critics. "The Godfather, Part II" won the Academy Award. Charlie Chaplin is knighted. Canada's Anglican Church approved ordaining women priests. U.S. Apollo and Soviet Soyuz 19 spacecrafts link up 140 miles into space. Andrei Sakharov, Russian physicist who developed the USSR's hydrogen bomb was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Emperor Haile Selassie, ruler of Ethiopia from 1916 to 1974, died. Rod Serling died. A musicians' strike closed 12 Broadway shows for 25 days. Casey Stengel died. Jimmy Hoffa disappeared. "The Sunshine Boys" with George Burns premiered.

In 1976, "A Chorus Line" won the Pulitzer Prize and the Tony award. Jimmy Carter was elected President. Tom Stoppard's "Travesties" won the New York Drama Critics and Tony awards for Best Play. "Roots" was published. "Rocky" was on the screen. Lee J. Cobb, Paul Robeson, Rosalind Russell, Guy Lombardo and Howard Hughes and J. Paul Getty died. "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" won the five major Academy Awards. The first SSTs were inaugurated. Landing vehicles from Viking I and II landed safely on Mars. Mao Tse-tung and Chicago's Mayor Richard J. Daley died. "Smokey the Bear" died. Hank Aaron retired with 755 career home runs. An estimated 780,000 died in earthquakes in Italy, China, the Philippines, Turkey, Bali and Guatemala.

In June, 1977, the Academy Theatre in the Village of Wappingers Falls comes on the market. It has been metamorphosed from a community basketball center to a movie theatre to a flea market in its 40 year existence. (See "Biography of a Building" elsewhere in this publication.) James Hart meets with the Village Planning Board to obtain final approvals. The purchase comes in August - giving County Players its first real home - a fulfilled dream! Renamed "County Players Falls Theatre", the building begins its renovation. Working three nights a week and weekends, it takes crews six months to clean the house - inside and out. Under the guidance of Jim Hart, John Sloper and John Bono and dozens of other volunteers, a new thrust stage was added, lights hung, 400 seats acquired and bolted into place, a backstage created, the public bathrooms brought to function, and the marquee repaired in time to advertise our first show in our first house - "Toys in the Attic". There is no heat, no plumbing backstage. Heat for rehearsals is provided by a football field heater. The air is musty, dusty and rank - but it is our own! And with the opening of our own Theatre, we are able to add a "bonus", fund-raising production during the summer months, the first being "An Evening With Gilbert & Sullivan". Work parties continue to improve the building - cleaning, repairing, painting. Thousands and thousands of volunteer hours are spent. County Players Falls Theatre becomes a home away from home for dozens of loyal workers. And all the while, our plays are produced to increasing large and increasingly appreciative, audiences.

Also, 1977, witnessed the deaths of Elvis Presley, Joan Crawford, Zero Mostel, Ethel Waters, Alfred Lunt, Groucho Marx, Charlie Chaplin, Wernher von Braun, Vladimir Nabokov, Bing Crosby and Maria Callas. "Star Wars" was released (for the first time). Michael Cristofer won the Pulitzer and Tony for "The Shadow Box". "Annie" won for best musical. David Mamet's "American Buffalo" won the NY Drama Critics award for best play. A massive blackout in New York left 9 million people without electricity. Queen Elizabeth celebrated her Silver Jubilee. U.S. population reached 216 million.

In the Summer of 1978, County Players starts the tradition of producing "bonus" productions when the Theatre would otherwise be dark between the Spring musical and the opening show of the following season in the Fall. These shows are talent showcases for vocalists, instrumentalists, magicians, dancers, tumblers, and anyone who has a yen to be on stage. The money realized from these productions is added to the

building fund whose resources are being spent at a prodigious rate. Under the command of Restoration Chairman, John Sloper, the two mini-stages are installed, a new electrical system and lights are installed, new seats, donated by IBM, are put in place, new curtains and draperies are installed by Pete Edman, and the rented costume storage area is improved by Therese Knight. Assisting Pete Edman in removing the old and installing the new wall fabric is the first of the Second Generation - Peter and Bernice's son, Neil, himself an accomplished performer. And the year sees the official ribbon-cutting ceremony opening the Theatre, by the Village of Wappinger's Mayor Don Synnett. In the Fall, Jacqueline Wilder and Johanna Stech chair the first 200-Club Dinner-Dance, an invaluable fund-raiser which provides a social evening and adds to the general treasury. County Players enters its production of "Rashomon" in the New York State Theatre Festival Regional competition at Marist College, and sponsors the State Festival at the Arlington Senior High School.

In 1978, Menahem Begin of Israel and Anwar Sadat of Egypt won the Nobel Peace Prize (Sadat was later assassinated). "Da" won the Tony for best play. "The Gin Game" debuted. "Annie Hall" won the Academy Award. Norman Rockwell died (his granddaughter, Abby, later played the lead in our production of "Carousel". The movies, "The Deer Hunter" and "Grease" opened. Disco music took the nation by storm. The first "test tube baby" was born in England. Nine hundred and seventeen people died by murder-suicide at Jim Jones's cult commune in Guyana.

In 1979, another second generation performer hits the scene. Mimi Friedenbergl [this proud author's daughter] at age 13 debuts in "Picnic", and her vocal quartet, Harmony, performs at the Membership Meeting. Theatre upgrading sees the installation of a fire alarm system. A proposal is entertained to produce a Winter Holiday production of "A Christmas Carol". County Players continues to expand its theatrical sophistication with "Kismet". And the restoration continues.

In 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini deposed the Shah of Iran. Nelson Rockefeller died. "Sophie's Choice" hit the market. Sam Shepard won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama with "Buried Child". "The Elephant Man" won the NY Drama Critics and Tony awards. "Amadeus" and "Sweeney Todd" opened. Mother Teresa won the Nobel Peace Prize. Mary Pickford, John Wayne, Richard Rodgers, Gracie Fields and Nelson Rockefeller and stripper Sally Rand died. Patty Hearst was released from prison. Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister of Great Britain. Voyager I discovered a ring around Jupiter. Nuclear disaster was narrowly averted at Three Mile Island, PA.

In 1980, John Sloper, founder and driving force of County Players is named its first Honorary Lifetime Member. For the first time, County Players produces four productions, starting a trend that continues today. "The Glass Menagerie" is produced as a summer bonus production and is adjudicated "Highly Recommended" to the NY State Theatre Festival, in Jamestown, NY. Directed by Rose Mastrovito (now Navarra), featuring Rachel Cassidy, Rosalind Turow (now Ashford-Croschier, and chairman of the Ruby Celebration), Jeffrey Borak and James Wood, it sees Ros win Best Actress for her interpretation of Laura Wingfield in the Tennessee Williams classic. County Players' Young Players stages its first production, "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown", which is a smash hit. Young Players comprises theatre-loving high schoolers who met through the High School Drama Awards program and wish to continue their association under County Players' auspices.

In 1980, Ronald Reagan, actor, was elected President. "Talley's Folly" won the Pulitzer Prize for drama. "Camelot" revived and "Children of a Lesser God" opened in New York. Jimmy Durante, Sir Alfred Hitchcock, Peter Sellers, Jay Silverheels (Tonto) and Steve McQueen and Mae West died. John Lennon was assassinated in New York City. Mount St. Helens erupted, killing 36. The wreck of the "Titanic" was found 12,000 feet deep. Smallpox was eradicated. A severe summer heatwave leaves 1,100 dead in 20 states. A million visitors view the Picasso Retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in NYC. Andrei Sakharov, Nobelist, was stripped of his honors and exiled by the U.S.S.R. President Carter breaks off relations with Iran. Reza Pahlavi, deposed Shah of Iran, died. Iraq invaded Iran. Eric Heiden won a record five gold medals at the Olympics in Lake Placid.

In 1981, ceiling fans are installed in the Theatre. Planning is begun for the 25th (Silver) Anniversary of County Players, spearheaded by Carole DiNonno. Rose Mastrovito's "A Delicate Balance", a summer bonus, is nominated for presentation at the NY State Theatre Festival in Valhalla.

In 1981, John Hinckley attempted to assassinate President Reagan. "Crimes of the Heart" won the Pulitzer Prize. "Nicholas Nickleby" (all 8 hours) played to capacity crowds and "Cats" opened in NYC. Walter Cronkite retired. Muhammad Ali retired. IBM launched its "home" or "personal" computer. "Ordinary People" won the Academy Award. Mary Chase, author of "Harvey", Hoagy Carmichawl, Harry Chapin, Bill Haley, William Holden, Vera-Ellen and Natalie Wood died. Sandra Day O'Connor became the U.S. Supreme Court's first woman justice. Bobby Sands, an I.R.A. activist, died in prison after 66 days of a hunger strike. Scientists identified Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The first U.S. space shuttle, "Columbia", successfully made its maiden flight. Chinese scientists were the first to successfully clone a fish.

In 1982, the Board approves the installation of Air Conditioning! As part of the Silver Anniversary celebration, "A Christmas Carol" is presented at Yuletide. Plans for a Silver Gala Dinner in April, 1983, and participation in Wappingers Day in July are being completed. Young Players continues its endeavors with a fabulous production of "Man of La Mancha".

In 1982, Elizabeth Taylor debuted in "The Little Foxes" in London. A federal court in Little Rock, Arkansas, declared it unconstitutional to teach "creationism" equally with the theory of evolution. The centenary of Charles Darwin's death was marked by conferences throughout the world. The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial was dedicated in Washington, D.C. Ingrid Bergman, Grace Kelly, Henry Fonda and John Belushi died. Sophia Loren spends a month in jail for tax evasion. "Chariots of Fire" won the Academy Award. Heart-lung and kidney-pancreas transplants were successful. ATT broke up. The Experimental Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT) opened in Orlando. The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company closed. 28 million U.S. households have cable television.

In 1983, the Silver Gala Dinner-Dance is held on April 23, at the Villa Borghese in Wappingers Falls. The theatre air conditioning is completed, to everyone's joy and relief. County Players participates in the Wappingers Falls Community Day Parade. Representing County Players at the Wappingers Falls Tercentenary Celebration Dinner is "Panacea", a vocal duo - Mimi Friedenberg and Carleton Rounds (Arlington High Schoolers and Young Players veterans) - accompanied by pianist Gary Palmieri. Young Players continues with "Damn Yankees". And County Players hosts Prudence Garcia-Renart and John Gordon in "The Four-Poster", as a bonus, fund-raising production.

Our dear friend, and long-time County Players associate, John W. Judd, a superb actor and lovely man, dies in the Spring. To honor his memory, the High School Drama Awards for most promising actor and actress are re-named the John W. Judd Award for Most Promising Talents.

And it was with deep sorrow and a profound sense of loss that we said our final farewell to John T. Sloper, Founder of County Players, Life Member, prime mover, lover of peace, helper to those in need, humanitarian and good friend. John died in August, 1983, leaving a legacy of goodness, truthfulness, generosity of spirit and love. Those who were fortunate enough to have known him will always hear the echo of his unique laughter ringing through the Theatre and our hearts.

A memorial service for John was held at the Theatre on September 18, with music he loved and tributes and readings from those who loved him.

John's gifts to County Players, too numerous to mention, included his extensive library, and a legacy of \$200.00 a month for 20 years to be paid by Sloper-Willen Ambulance Service from its resources to County Players. This final gesture of generosity contributed enormously to the financial health of the company. If you did not know John, ask anyone who did, and you will be rewarded with a wealth of anecdotes about this fabulous character who is our spiritual father.

*In 1983, Lech Walesa won the Nobel Peace Prize. Lynn Fontanne and Tennessee Williams died. "A Chorus Line" became the longest-running show on Broadway after its 3,389th performance. "M*A*S*H*" ended after 251 episodes. Gloria Swanson and David Niven died. "Ghandi" won the Academy Award. "Flashdance", "The Big Chill", "Yentl" and "Terms of Endearment" opened. George Balanchine died. Michael Jackson's "Beat It" topped the charts. Sally Ride was the first American woman in space. The use of aspartame was approved. Two-year drought in Ethiopia brought famine to millions, while The Rhine River flooded. France tested its neutron bomb. The compact disc is launched.*

In 1984, alumni/ae from The Young Players come together to present "Limelight", as a fund-raiser and summer activity for the kids home from college. Drawing people from all over the Hudson Valley, the Theatre's capabilities expanded greatly. County Players participates in the City of Poughkeepsie's celebration of the 200th anniversary of *The Poughkeepsie Journal* with a float in the parade (our handmade surrey from "Oklahoma") and a re-enactment of the signing of the Declaration of Independence (a scene from "1776").

In 1984, President Reagan was re-elected. Richard Burton, Truman Capote and Lillian Hellman died. "Glengarry Glen Ross" won the Pulitzer Prize for drama. Dustin Hoffman revived "Death of a Salesman". "Sundays in the Park with George" opened. Ethel Merman died. Michael Jackson won eight Grammys for "Thriller", which sold 37+ million copies. The Apple Macintosh and mouse were launched. DNA analysis revealed that chimps and humans have only a 1% genetic difference. "Baby Fae" died 20 days after a baboon heart transplant. Donald Duck turned 50. A toxic gas leak in Bhopal, India, killed 2,500 people.

In 1985, Chet London, an experienced Broadway, television and film actor, partner of the Herrick Marionettes, leads an exploratory acting workshop, as County Players continues to broaden its horizons from production to education. And "Shenanigans", a fun-filled fund-raiser is produced during the summer months.

And in 1985, President Reagan announced sanctions against South Africa. Jason Robards brought "The Iceman Cometh" back to Broadway. "Lake Wobegon Days" was published. Yul Brynner, Marc Chagall, Rock Hudson, Rick Nelson, Eugene Ormandy and Orson Welles died. The Live Aid Rock Concert raised over \$60 million for African famine relief. No Tonys were given for best actor, actress or choreographer because of "low overall standard". A 340 million year-old amphibian skeleton was discovered in Scotland. Roger Maris died. The U.K. started screening blood donations for the AIDS virus. Kasparov becomes world's youngest chess champion, later to be defeated in 1997 by IBM's Deep Blue. The wreck of the "Titanic" was photographed by a remote-controlled camera.

In 1986, The Facelift begins! The marquee, rest rooms and lobby are under reconstruction, to include heat in the lobby! Stage lighting and the sound system are upgraded. Again, County Players participates in the Wappingers Community Day parade. Our production of "Agnes of God" is invited to perform at the main theatre at SUNY New Paltz. The production is also invited to the NYS Theatre Festival in Harnell (Alfred U.), New York, and wins First Prize for Drama.

In 1986, Elie Wiesel won the Nobel Peace Prize. "Breaking the Code" opened in NYC. James Cagney, Dutchess County resident, died. Cary Grant, Donna Reed, Ray Milland, Elsa Lanchester and Alan Jay Lerner died. "Out of Africa" won Best Picture Academy Award. "Les Miserables" won eight Tonys; "The Phantom of the Opera" premiered in London (they are still running). Whitney Houston and Madonna were the pop music divas. The Chernobyl nuclear reactor blew up. The space shuttle "Challenger" exploded on take-off. The U.S. reported 25,000 cases of AIDS. The first heart, lung, liver transplant succeeded in England. Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson are married. Toxic gas from volcanic Lake Nyos, Cameroon, kills 20,000. John Paul II became the first Pope in recorded history to visit a synagogue.

In 1987, County Players begins plans to celebrate its Thirtieth Anniversary with a dinner-cruise on the Hudson River in September. The 30th season is announced: "On Golden Pond" is directed by Bill Peckham; "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" is directed by Rachel Cassidy; "You Can't Take It With You"

is directed by Anna Marie Creighton; and "Hello, Dolly!" is directed by Chris Seman. In June, the company participates in the City of Poughkeepsie's 300th anniversary parade, one of whose chairmen is Joe Cassidy; Bill Peckham is in charge of our float. The electronics age is ushered in with the purchase of a telephone answering machine! We are "evicted" from our costume loft at the Community Service Center, and a search of suitable places yields us space in the newly re-opened "bleachery", now the Wappingers Industrial Park. A joint fund-raiser for us and for the Hudson Valley Gilbert & Sullivan Society is planned - "Wine, Persons and Song - a toast to Operetta", to be mounted in the summer.

In 1987, Michael Dukakis and George Bush announced their presidential candidacies. August Wilson's "Fences" won the Pulitzer Prize for drama. "Steel Magnolias" and "Driving Miss Daisy" opened. Fred Astaire, Rita Hayworth, Jackie Gleason, John Huston, Danny Kaye, Lee Marvin, Robert Preston and Andy Warhol died. "Platoon" won Best Picture. Sondheim's "Into the Woods" premiered. Choreographers Michael Bennett ("A Chorus Line") and Bob Fosse ("Chicago") died. Liberace died. 1987 was shortened by one second to adjust it to the Gregorian calendar. A South African woman gave birth to her own grandchildren (triplets) after her daughter's fertilized ova were implanted. A nest of fossilized dinosaur eggs was identified in Alberta, Canada. The Z88 portable computer weighing less than 2 pounds was launched. Excavations for the Anglo-French tunnel (Chunnel) were begun. Baroness Maria von Trapp died. Bill (then known as David) Gates, 32 years old, becomes microcomputing's first billionaire. A Yugoslavian baby boy is declared the world's five billionth inhabitant.

In 1988, seat numbering is initiated to augment the newly developed reserved seat program. County Players participates in Hospice Tree of Life benefit ceremony at the South Hills Mall. The dressing rooms in the Theatre are refurbished. A standardized season program layout is developed. On April 23, 1988, active members, Steve Kable and Ruth Praskey, are married at the Theatre. They had met because of their involvement with the company and thought it appropriate to stage their wedding ceremony there. Complete with white runner, flowers, organist, soloist, candelabra and a photo of a stained glass window, the touching ceremony marks the first real-life wedding in the Theatre. The roof is repaired and the women's room is re-fixtured. County Players participates in "Art in the Park" in the Village of Wappinger. County Players is hailed by proclamation of County Executive Lucille Pattison on the occasion of its Thirtieth Anniversary, which is celebrated by a dinner-cruise on the Hudson River.

In 1988, The Gulf War ended. The Cold War was declared moribund. Crack cocaine was becoming a nationwide threat. The Discovery space shuttle was launched 32 months after the Challenger tragedy. The Stealth bomber was unveiled. George Bush became President. Panama's Manuel Noriega was indicted for drug smuggling. Toni Morrison won the Pulitzer Prize for her novel, "Beloved". "Rain Man" won the Oscar for best picture. The U.S. was warned about global warming. IBM announced its restructuring.

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In 1989, two County Players alumni, Scott Stevens and James Wood, tour the U.S. in the national tours of "Cabaret" and "LaTraviata" for the New York City Opera Company, respectively. The costume shop is moved to new, dry quarters at the Wappingers Falls Industrial Park. A new sound booth is constructed. Sadly, after much research and soul-searching, the High School Drama Awards program is canceled. During Act II of "Crimes of the Heart", the lights in the Theatre go out because of an auto accident on Sheafe Road. The audience elects that the show go on, and the ushers light the stage with flashlights! Troupers, indeed!

In 1989, President Bush and Soviet Premier Gorbachev announced the End of the Cold War, and Gorbachev was named Time Magazine's Man of the Decade. The Berlin Wall came down. The US invaded Panama. Two thousand died in Beijing, China's Tienaman Square demonstrating for greater democracy. Two hundred died in the October, 6.9 San Francisco earthquake. Lucille Ball and Bette Davis died. New York City elected its first African- American mayor, David Dinkins. Serial killer Ted Bundy was executed. SONY bought Columbia Pictures for 3.4 billion. Exxon's "Valdez" spilled 11 million tons of crude oil in

Alaskan waters. "Driving Miss Daisy" won the Oscar. "The Heidi Chronicles" won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

In 1990, new front doors, new ceiling lights and new aisle carpeting are installed, and the ceiling is painted black. The marquee is reconstructed because of a truck having struck it. The American Globe Theatre of New York City "resides" with County Players for five days in Summer, presenting workshops and performances in the classical style of British Shakespearean interpretation and acting. A wine and cheese reception is held the night of the performances.

In 1990, Nelson Mandela was freed after 27 years in a South African prison. Time, Inc. acquired Warner Communications for 14.1 billion. Moscow opened its first McDonald's in Moscow. U.S. population reached 248,709,873, up 10.2% from 1980. Sammy Davis, Jr. and Ava Gardner died. U.S. forces landed in Saudi Arabia, and a "line drawn in the sand" for Saddam Hussein. Atlanta was awarded the 1996 Olympics. Heavyweight boxer Buster Douglas beat Mike Tyson. "Dances With Wolves" won the Oscar. President Bush reversed his "Read my lips: No new taxes", and was named Time's Man of the Year.

In 1991, County Players begins revision of its 3-decades old by-laws. A survey of the technical needs and a wish list is begun. The costume loft is purged of unusable items and the accumulated "junk" of 34 years.

President Bush lifted economic sanctions against South Africa. The USSR began to disintegrate as Gorbachev resigned. Kuwait was liberated in 100 hours of fighting; 148 American dead - 150,000 Iraqi dead. Four Los Angeles cops were indicted for beating Rodney King. Michael Jackson signed a 1 billion dollar contract with SONY. The minimum wage was \$4.25 per hour. Dr. Seuss, Miles Davis, Michael Landon and Fred McMurray died. Ivana Trump won a 10 million dollar plus real estate divorce settlement. Martina Navratilova settled her palimony suit. Queen Elizabeth II was the first monarch to address a joint session of the U.S. Congress. Pan Am folded. IBM and Apple formed an alliance. Carl Lewis ran the 100 meter in World Record 9.86 seconds. William Kennedy Smith was acquitted of rape charges. Magic Johnson revealed that he is HIV positive.

In 1992, a major overhaul of the Theatre is begun. Named "Stage Fright", the project includes a state-of-the-art digital lighting system, a better lighting platform, flexible lighting hookups, a new internal communication system, improved back-stage air conditioning, new office and tech space, backstage and backstage bathroom reconstructed, a new power system. Peter Bleasby, Terrence Quinn, Jeff Wilson, Bob Bellini, Paul Schwerman, Doug Woolley, Joe Stifano, Tom Gaynor, Milt Forry and Peter Edman spearhead this monumental renovation and upgrading. Meanwhile, Joe Cassidy and Peter Edman re-coat the roof. County Players is named Best Community Theatre by the Hudson Valley Magazine poll.

In 1992, Leona Helmsley and John Gotti and Manuel Noriega and Mike Tyson and Jeffrey Dahmer went to jail. President Bush upchucked at State Dinner in Japan. Johnny Carson retired. Boston Celtics' great Larry Bird retired. "The Unforgiven" won the Oscar. Bill Clinton was elected President. Bill Clinton was Time's Man of the Year. Four Los Angeles cops were acquitted of beating Rodney King; Los Angeles erupted in riots - 37 dead, 600 million dollars in property damage. Hurricane Andrew smashed south Florida - 15 dead, 20 billion dollars in property damage. U.S. sent troops to starving Somalia. The U.S. Dream Team won basketball gold at Barcelona.

In 1993, County Players is named Best Community Theatre by the Hudson Valley Magazine poll for the second year in a row. A call goes out to the community for World War II stuff for next season's "South Pacific", and we are gifted with uniforms, field ration equipment, insignias, ammunition boxes, duffel bags, jerry cans, a canvas pail, a musette bag and even several pairs of authentic olive drab GI undershorts! And we think we are packrats! The scene shop is renovated and the resident raccoons are evicted.

In Waco, Texas, four Federal agents were murdered; the Branch Davidian siege ended in a firestorm - 90 adults and 17 children burned. Arthur Ashe died of AIDS. The National Archives opened its files relating to the assassination of President Kennedy. The Holocaust Museum opened in Washington. "Jurassic Park"

opened; "Cheers" closed. The U.S. Armed Forces' ban on women combat pilots ended. Dizzy Gillespie, Stewart Granger, Raymond Burr and Frank Zappa died. The Midwest was inundated by floods. Pope John Paul II went to Denver for World Youth Day. The 30th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech was marked. "Angels in America: Millennium Approaches" won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Toni Morrison won the Nobel Prize for Literature. The World Trade Center was bombed. Itzhak Rabin and Yassar Arafat signed an historic peace accord at the White House. Rabin was assassinated six weeks after signing the treaty with the PLO.

In 1994, the first weekend performances of "Rumors" are canceled because of a gas explosion in the Village of Wappingers and a simultaneous snow storm which necessitates work parties to clear the masses of accumulated snow from the imperiled roof. And, at long last, we contract to have the old roof removed and a A NEW ROOF finally installed. County Players' alumnus, Michael Rhodes, who debuted with the Theatre in "Look Homeward, Angel", opens on Broadway in Edward Albee's Pulitzer Prize winning "Three Tall Women".

In 1994, Los Angeles was jolted by a major earthquake. It was the 50th Anniversary of the D-Day Invasion of World War II. The World Series was canceled because of a strike. Saugerties, New York, hosted the 25th Anniversary of Woodstock - a celebration of "Peace, Love and Music". Grunge pop-musician, Kurt Cobain committed suicide. Burt Lancaster, Linus Pauling, Cab Calloway, Jessica Tandy, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Richard M. Nixon died. Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman were murdered. Michael Jackson married Lisa-Marie, Elvis Presley's daughter. "Forrest Gump" won the Oscar and a box of chocolates.

The U.S. invaded Haiti; no shots were fired; we won. The World Health Organization reported that more than 15 million people have contracted the HIV virus; we lose.

In 1995, County Players loses a very good friend. Milt Forry, who had worked on nearly every set in the Theatre and on "Stage Fright" died. He was a sweet, quiet, diligent and capable man who loved to talk theatre and work in it, and he will be fondly remembered by all who knew him. A new parking lot is opened in the Village, with some help from County Players, providing our patrons with better access to us. Also, in order better to serve our patrons, the women's rest room is doubled in size and totally remodeled.

In 1995, Microsoft released Windows 95. Fidel Castro visited New York for the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations. The Oklahoma City bombing stunned the world. Christopher Reeve (Superman) became paralyzed by a fall from a horse. Lana Turner and J. William Fulbright died. IBM dropped its dress code. The Million Man March was held in Washington, D.C. Newt Gingrich was named Time's Man of the Year. O. J. Simpson was acquitted of murder. The space probe, Galileo, yielded the first photos of Jupiter. A heatwave wilted Chicago and New York with days of triple digit temps.

In 1996, ticket demand requires that an extra performance be added to "La Cage aux Folles"! The stage floor is rebuilt with a new apron providing added storage space beneath. New backstage plumbing and sinks are installed in the stage left dressing room and the prop room. County Players performs at a Christmas Gala in freezing rain at Mesier Park, with readings from "A Christmas Carol" and seasonal songs. Plans are begun for a new marquee. Rosalind Croshier is appointed to head the Fortieth Anniversary Committee.

In 1996, The Blizzard of '96 killed more than 100 people and caused over 1 billion dollars in property damage. The U.S. sent troops to Bosnia. Timothy Leary died. The American ladies' gymnastics team (with Kerri Strug) won gold. A bomb rocked Atlanta's Olympic Village leaving 2 dead and 111 injured. TWA Flight 800 went down off Long Island. Tupac Shakur, rap musician and actor, was gunned down. California approved medicinal marijuana. Evander Holyfield defeated Mike Tyson by TKO. Dr. David Ho, AIDS researcher, was named Time's Man of the Year. "The English Patient" won the Oscar. "Rent", a musical based on the opera, "La Boheme", written by the late Jonathan Larson, won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. "Evita", starring Madonna, made it to the big screen. Nicotine patches were deemed safe.

In 1997, thanks to Jeff Wilson, County Players has its own Web Page on the Net. [HTTP://www.MHV.NET/~JWILSON/CP.HTML](http://www.MHV.NET/~JWILSON/CP.HTML). The box office is renovated to accommodate our increased patronage and our new computerized ticket sales. Credit cards are being accepted now! Welcome to the 21st Century to County Players. But an old-fashioned theatrical accessory, the half-century old marquee, is finally replaced with a beautiful new one. The Theatre's Fortieth (Ruby) Anniversary celebration begins with an open house reception at the Theatre in August, attended by more than 300 people.

In 1997, Diana, Princess of Wales, and Mother Teresa died, and the world mourned. The Hale-Bopp comet's approached Earth after 4,200 years, was viewed by millions and triggered mass suicide near San Diego. The robot, Sojourner, landed on Mars, deployed itself and sent back historic photos. Mike Tyson lost to Evander Holyfield after biting his opponent's ears. The first clone from an adult cell, Dolly the Sheep, was born/created/whatever. The world's first septuplets (that's seven) were born to the McCaughey family in Iowa, a result of in vitro fertilization. One in 100 sexually active persons between 15 and 49 were living with HIV or AIDS. The IBM Supercomputer beat Garry Kasparov at chess. "Spam" glutted e-mail. Jackie Robinson's shirt was retired at the 50th anniversary of his first game. Tiger Woods, at 21, was the youngest man to win the Masters Golf Tournament. O. J. Simpson was found liable in the civil trial arising from the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman. Bell Lab's 1947 invention of the transistor continued its metamorphosis into the Intel II processor chip which is 7.5 million transistors in a space smaller than a dime. Bill Clinton was inaugurated for his second term.

In 1998, thus far, County Players continues to celebrate its Fortieth (Ruby) Anniversary at a gala dinner at the Holiday Inn in Fishkill! A clambake to thank those who have participated with County Players is planned for August. Plans are underway for work in the Summer to upgrade the Theatre's auditorium with new fabric on the walls, new seats, new wainscoting and new carpeting. Because of sell-out performances of earlier shows, the Spring musical, "Anything Goes", is scheduled for eight performances. The Board of Governors votes to continue to hold the current ticket prices. The 1998-1999 season is announced: "Twilight of the Golds", to be directed by Joe Jervais; "How the Other Half Loves", to be directed by Rachel Cassidy; "Lost in Yonkers", to be directed by Jeff Wilson; and "Into the Woods", to be directed by Anna Marie Creighton.

In 1998, thus far, Oprah Winfrey won her battle for free speech against Texas beefmen. John Glenn was selected to return to space at age 76, 36 years after his Friendship 7 flight. California banned smoking in bars. Pope John Paul II visited Communist Cuba. El Nino hit causing floods in Virginia, tornadoes in Florida, floods and mudslides in California, floods in Peru and Ecuador, droughts in Australia, fire in Indonesia. A new strain of influenza caused Hong Kong officials to kill all the chickens there. Genetic repair was made possible with splicing of DNA. Hand-held computers were introduced on the market. Sonny Bono and Michael Kennedy died in skiing accidents and Lloyd Bridges and Bella Abzug died. "Titanic" won eleven Oscars and broke all box office records for a film. "Seinfeld" called it quits. The State of Israel celebrated its 50th Anniversary. U.S. and U.N. verbally battled Iraq over possible germ and chemical weapons; none were found by U.N. inspectors. One-third of the shows on Broadway are revivals. 81% of U.S. homes have V(ideo) C(assette) R(ecorders). There were 3.2 tv sets per U.S. household. The VW Beetle returned. The Dow-Jones Industrial Average topped out over 9,000 for the first time in history.

What comes next??????? Stay tuned....