



HONORARY ALUMNI AWARDS

Helen Manfull



To Helen Manfull for her outstanding and ongoing contributions to educating, mentoring, and inspiring Penn State students for more than 40 years.

Penn State Professor Emerita Helen Manfull's legendary "Introduction to Theatre" class usually started with a fight. As Manfull lectured on the first day, two students in the class of hundreds would start arguing. As the fight escalated, other students often intervened.

"Once several football players got involved," Manfull said, "and another time a police officer who was taking the class tried to break it up."

It was all a set-up. The fighting students were theatre majors Manfull planted to show that theatre is found everywhere. Students who took Theatre 100—a course she developed to introduce undergraduates to theatre and fulfill general education requirements—certainly remember Manfull and the class. The theatre majors and graduate students who got a larger dose of Manfull remember her generosity, compassion, and wisdom. Ten years into

retirement, Manfull remains involved with students and continues to work on behalf of the School of Theatre and the College of Arts and Architecture.

A native of Ohio, Manfull received her bachelor's degree from what is now Miami University of Ohio and her master's and doctoral degrees in speech and theatre from the University of Minnesota. She arrived at Penn State in the mid-1960s, at first teaching part-time while caring for her young sons. From 1973 through 1996, she taught acting, directing, children's theatre, creative drama, and women and theatre, among other courses.

Though technically retired from Penn State since 1996, Manfull continues to teach, filling in as needed and helping the School of Theatre with volunteer fundraising and alumni events. When former theatre students return to campus, they always request time to catch up with Manfull.

She and her late husband, Lowell, also a Penn State theatre professor, established a prize given annually to a theatre graduate student with outstanding academic achievement for the year.

When both Manfulls retired, two former students created a scholarship in their names. Hundreds of former students have contributed to the scholarship fund as has Manfull, and following Lowell's death in 2004, many friends and colleagues contributed to the fund in his honor. The scholarship, awarded to a senior undergraduate who has contributed richly to the School of Theatre, was offered for the first time this year.

Manfull also gives generously of her time to the local community. She has served on the boards of the Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts and the Theatre Association of Pennsylvania. Currently, she is an audio-describer for people with sight loss during Arts Festival, and she teaches as a volunteer for the Community Academy for Lifelong Learning.

Manfull is a member of Actors' Equity and has acted in and directed numerous plays. Favorite roles include Abby in *Arsenic and Old Lace*, Daisy in *Driving Miss Daisy*, and Ouiser in *Steel Magnolias*. Favorite directing credits are *Fen, Frog and Toad*, and *Our Town*. She is also the author of four books on theatre.

Penn State has honored Manfull with the Lindback Award for Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching (1985) and the Lion's Paw Award (1996), for notable service to the University. She is also a fellow emerita of the Institute for Arts and Humanistic Studies.

Manfull has two sons—Benjamin, who graduated with a master's degree from Penn State in 1987, and James—and three grandsons. She lives in State College, Pa.

