

# Winging It

The Newsletter of the National Society for the Preservation of Tent, Folk and Repertoire Theatre

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A watercolor painting of the Jack Kelly Stock Show, a tent show that toured Michigan for over 40 years. This piece was created in 1936 by Professor Oren Parker, a theatrical design instructor at Carnegie Mellon University. This is from the museum's collection.

**The National Society  
for the  
Preservation of Tent,  
Folk  
& Repertoire  
Theatre**

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Dr. Monie Hayes

**First Vice President**

Mrs. James V. Davis

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Spencer Barton

**Museum Hours:**

Memorial Day  
to Labor Day :  
Thursday,  
Friday, & Saturday  
10:00-4:00

Fall to Spring  
Open by  
appointment

**Winging It  
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Grace Swank-Davis

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**President's Letter**

Greetings, friends:

I wish you a happy spring season, and I hope to see many of you on our Zoom screen when the National Society for the Preservation of Tent, Folk, and Repertoire Theatre convenes here at the museum and in video conference this month. The meeting will take place on April 30 at 6 pm. Please check your email for a link to the meeting and a meeting agenda.

This will be my final president's message in the *Winging It*, as my second term is expiring, and I announced last year that I would not stand for reelection to this office again. I am grateful and delighted that Mark Peper of Branson, Missouri, has stepped up to run for the office of board president. I first met Mark when we were both onstage and under the canvas with Jimmy and Grace Davis for their run at *Old Threshers* in 1997. Mark toured with Jimmy and the Schaffner Players during their 1980, '81, and '82 seasons. And at least as long as I've been volunteering at the museum and serving on the board, which is more than ten years, Mark has been a loyal and active member of the National Society leadership.

We continue to network and collaborate with other museum, library, arts, and history professionals and volunteers. For example, also next month, Grace will share a few words when the Harlan-Lincoln House in Mt. Pleasant hosts a guest speaker discussing a Iowa legend regarding Sarah Bernhardt. I will continue to work on public education projects that take our story beyond the museum walls, where you are always welcome. Give us a call, and best to you in the coming year and beyond.

Sincerely,  
*Monie*



Hi, everybody!

My name is Spencer Barton, and I have been working as a museum contractor at the Theatre Museum since last summer. I have always loved museums and archives due to their ability to preserve and tell stories of the people and objects of the past. I grew up in the Quad Cities where I was involved in music and theatre. I attended Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa and studied History and Chemistry. I continued my education at Western Illinois University as part of their Masters degree program in Museum Studies. I had internships at the German American Heritage Center and the Bix Beiderbecke Museum and World Archive, both of which located in Davenport, Iowa.

Following my Masters program, I began working at Iowa Wesleyan University in the fall of 2022 as their archive specialist and as the director of the Harlan-Lincoln House. Unfortunately, the school closed the next spring and my time there was cut short. Not long after losing my job, I began working at the Henry County Heritage Trust to aid in the creation of The Iowa Wesleyan Archives, the new home of the vast majority of the history and records related to that once great and still beloved institution.

My specialty in museum work is collection care and registration. I love working with objects and creating records, both digital and physical, to ensure each artifact is cared for, accessible, and able to tell its story. This has been my primary task while working at the Theatre Museum. The Caroline Schaffner Research Library has an incredible collection of photographs, letters, posters, programs, and the vast majority of these items have been recorded into a database system. I have been conducting an audit on this database and applying some corrections to records in order to make it easier to locate records based on topics, specific people, or types of artifacts. Additionally, I have begun the process of cataloging the impressive collection of artifacts on display in the Theatre Museum's exhibit hall. This is a slow and intensive process which includes taking photographs of every single artifact, recording their dimensions, noting any signs of damage or wear, and describing each item with as much detail as possible so anyone would be able to read this description and know what to look for. This is no small task but I am honored to play such an important role in preserving the history of tent theatre through this position.

When I am not working in museums, I tutor chemistry and physics at Southeastern Community College in nearby Burlington. I also play viola with the Southeast Iowa Symphony Orchestra and the Muscatine Symphony Orchestra. Lastly, love photography and will take trips to towns and forests around southeast Iowa to make photographs of both urban and rural life, as well as natural life.

I look forward to continuing my work at the Theatre Museum and I can only hope that my expertise will continue to strengthen the legacy of tent theatre history and the stories of countless troupers.

Don't forget to make someone smile today,

Spencer A. Barton



We were really sad to hear that Bob Hollis has passed away. Bob and his wife Wilma were longtime supporters of the museum and regulars at our annual conference for many years. Bob was always part of the Saturday night entertainment, and we could always count on Wilma to play piano for specialties which she did beautifully.

Bob led a life well lived. It was really nice to have known you. He'll be missed, and we'll be thinking of Wilma and their family with love.

Grace Swank-Davis

## AD LIBS

By Grace Swank-Davis

Greetings from beautiful downtown Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

Spring is in the air!! It's that time of year, time to renew your membership!! Also, it's time for elections. You will find a ballot, a dues form and a stamped self-addressed envelope included with this issue of *Winging It*. Please mail your ballot in time for the April 30<sup>th</sup> meeting. And you can also include your dues for the year. If you have already paid, and some of you have, please disregard the call for dues. We thank you and if I inadvertently included a dues form, sorry.

Now for the elections. Four board members, the Treasurer and the President are up for election. As noted in her President's letter, Monie Hayes will not be standing for re-election as President. Long time Society member, Mark Peper has graciously agreed to run for the office of President. Mark, who lives in Brandson, Missouri, is the owner of *The Cruiseman*, a National Travel Agency, specializing in cruise and land vacations. If you need a vacation, he's the man. Mark has plenty of acting experience, starting with the Schaffner Players back in the early '80s. Most recently, he was in a production of *Arsenic and Old Lace* this past March. He has been a keen supporter of the museum and a board member since I don't know when. I think he will make a great Prez and I'm looking forward to working with him. Of course, you can write in a name if you prefer. Please include your email if you would care to attend the annual meeting via Zoom. For the first time you may vote by email. Remember, the meeting is 6pm Center Time, April 30, 2025. Be there or be square.

We want to give Monie Hayes a BIG thank you for serving two terms as President. As Monie completes her term, we extend our appreciation for her time and service to the museum. Transitions bring new opportunities, and we look forward to continuing our mission with renewed energy and commitment. Of course, she will be on the board and will continue with her projects.

Just like with tent shows spring brings the promise of a new season with endless possibilities and we here at the museum are excited to get this show on the road! We have put together a marketing plan to send to bus tour companies and we have a bus tour booked for June from the Putnam Museum Auxiliary in Davenport, IA. I am still tweaking the exhibits and will be putting up new and improved labels for the displays.

I have been watching some YouTube videos made by the P. T. Barnum Museum in Bridgeport, CT, where they share information about P.T. and their museum. The videos are very well made, and I thought this would be a perfect project for us as well. Luckily, our new archivist, Spencer Barton, is a wonderful photographer and videographer and has all necessary equipment, so we're moving ahead with this project. We've already got one "in the can", it's an introduction to the museum with a voiceover by second Vice President David Wagaman. Each video will be from 2 ½ to 3 ½ minutes long. Some of the topics that we're planning to cover include: what is a tent show, what kind of plays did they do, who is Toby?, stars that got their start in tent shows, and much more. We already have about 10 or 12 topics lined up. We plan to start posting on YouTube by the end of May and release a new video approximately every 10 days. Do you have any suggestions for topics we could cover in our upcoming videos? We'd love to hear them if you do!

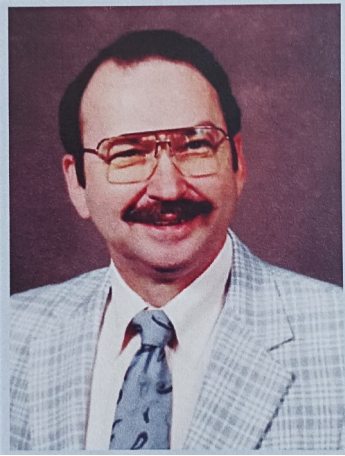
If you haven't already, follow us on Facebook, Spencer is posting some very interesting articles every Friday. Help get the word out!

We're starting off the new year with two new members! Let's welcome Hilda Demuth-Lutze and Lisa Stone. Hilda drove to Mount Pleasant from Indiana to do research for a novel she's writing that takes place on a tent show. Her friend Lisa drove down from Wisconsin to join her and to see our Opera House curtains. They were here for a day and a half, and it was a very delightful visit. I hope we see them both again now that they are members.

Well, that's all for now, remember to be a buster for the museum and check us out on Facebook, oh, and remember you are always on the lot,

Grace





**Robert Eugene "Bob" Hollis**

Robert Eugene Hollis, known to many as Bob, passed away on January 31, 2025, at The Waters of Scottsburg. He was 87 years old. Born on February 9, 1937, Bob grew up in Evansville, Indiana, and graduated from Reitz High School in 1954. During his school years, he was active in drama and music, passions he carried throughout his life.

Bob continued his education at Wabash College and Evansville College, where he was a member of the TKE fraternity and remained close with his fraternity brothers. One summer, he toured with the Sun Players owned by Jess and Dot Sund performing under tents across Missouri.

He later joined the U.S. Air Force and was stationed in Goose Bay, where he served in recreational duty. His love for music continued there as a member of a rock band that competed against other military bands, earning several trophies.

In the early 1980s, Bob made Scottsburg his home. On September 5, 1981, he married Wilma Hardy Hollis, and together they built a life filled with love and shared experiences.

Bob worked in radio before serving as the Scott County Veterans Affairs Officer. He later became a reporter and, eventually, the editor of the *Scott County Journal Newspaper*, where his passion for storytelling and community engagement flourished.

A dedicated member of the Masonic Lodge in Lexington, Bob held several offices and deeply valued his involvement with the organization. Bob and his wife, Wilma, were longtime members of the National Society and regularly attended its annual conferences.

Bob was preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by his beloved wife of 43 years, Wilma; his son; two grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and many cherished cousins.

Memorial contributions in Bob's honor may be made to the Lexington Christian Church or the Scott County Indiana Heritage Center and Museum.

## The Show Must Go On

by Wallace Byers

Will you tell me my trouping friend,  
What is your wish when time comes the end?  
The trouper thought for his reply  
Just what he'd wish when death came nigh.

I want my friends with loving care  
To bury me with tears and prayers.  
And while they weep that I am gone  
I want the show to go right on.

In sunshine, snowstorm, rain or gale  
When troubles come we will not fail  
We'll carry on in gloom or mirth  
Against all fates of heav'n and earth

And e'en if death should take her toll  
Another friend will take the roll  
The show must go on as before  
Just as it will forever more.

Found in a showman's scrapbook

# UNDER CANVAS

## WYOMING

Week Starting Monday, May 27

1907

### Jessie Colton

AND HER BIG DRAMATIC COMPANY



CHANGE OF PLAY NIGHTLY

**5 BIG SPECIALTIES 5**



Admission : 25 cents

Children : 15 cents

**Follow the Merry Crowd**