

## SPOTLIGHT ON: JEAN VICKERS

by Lori Robak



When Jean Vickers suggested to Enter Stage Left Theater that they work with the Cultural Arts Alliance to produce a fundraising show to renovate the CAA barn, she figured she was taking a risk. “I was afraid they would see me as a silly middle-aged woman with a Judy Garland/Mickey Rooney vision of ‘hey, let’s put on a show,’” she explained.

Fortunately, ESL didn’t think that, and in fact, welcomed her idea. “We truly credit Jean for jump-starting ESL to the next level,” said Kelly Grill, one of ESL’s co-founders. “When she came to us with her idea for a barn fundraiser it was if all the stars aligned and brought us together at just the right time. Jean had the energy and drive to inspire us to write *Lullaby on Broadway* and it was the success of that show that proved there was a large pool of talent here in Hopkinton and a need for a theater troupe.”

Jean not only ended up producing *Lullaby*, but she also performed in it. “I hadn’t been on stage since my early 30s,” said Jean, whose acting vocation began at age six when she and some family members and friends put on “shows” behind blankets on a clothesline. “I was delighted with the professional approach of ESL. Quality is the watchword with them,” she said. “They are great people to work with – they are experienced, fun and intelligent.”

Jean went on to perform in other ESL productions, including *Hooray for Hollywood*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *All My Sons*, and the recent *USO Show*. “The theater is a great place to explore parts of your personality and history and express them without emotional risk,” she explained. “Serious drama gives you a chance to examine real depths of human emotion and connect with people.”

However, Jean doesn’t see acting as all work and deep introspection. “It really is a lot of fun!” she said with a huge smile. “That’s why they call it a ‘play’.”

Jean was delighted when ESL opened their studios at 30 Main Street last year. “What they are doing is fantastic,” she said. “Now they have the opportunity to do things year-round and involve many people from so many different parts of the community. That is a real treasure.” She said this echoes her dream of a place where artistic people could find each other and produce something special.

Unfortunately, Jean will be leaving Hopkinton soon to join her relocated family in Tucson, Arizona. “This is a new adventure and I’m excited about it. There are 35 theaters in Tucson and I’m absolutely going to join one!” she said.

Whichever theater Jean joins will be very fortunate to have her as a member. “One of Jean’s biggest talents lies in her ability to network with people and make connections that need to be made,” Kelly stated “She starts the ball rolling and guides you to places you didn’t think were possible. She has been one of our biggest cheerleaders and she is and always will be an important member of the ESL family. We will miss her dearly.”

Jean says that part of her will always remain with ESL. “I won’t miss the New England winters but I am going to miss ESL --- the laughter, the opportunity to be part of it’s growth, the evenings at Cornell’s,” she stated. But don’t count her completely out. “I’ll be back for the major performances – as long as they aren’t during a snowstorm!”