



The Field of Excellence

Many thousands of people have graduated from the University of Alberta over the past 99 years. These people have gone on to jobs throughout the world to varying degrees of success. But, from every graduating class, there are those that stand out above their peers for their work in medicine, engineering, the arts, politics and other pursuits. On Thursday, 27 September, the U of A Alumni Association hosted a gala event to honour the recipients of this year's alumni awards. 38 former U of A students from all walks of life were honoured; here are five of them.

PHOTOS BY STEFFI ROSSKOPF AND TAMMY WONG

HE GRADUATED FROM THE U OF A IN 1960 WITH A Bachelor of Education, and today, **ROBERT HEDLEY** is the recipient of the 2007 Award of Excellence. This award recognizes outstanding achievement in a specific field. In Hedley's case, his outstanding achievement is in two areas: education and theatre.

Hedley has always been passionate about teaching. As an Education student at the U of A, however, he soon discovered another passion.

"In those days, every student incoming to the University had to do one of the arts. My mother was a pianist; my father played the trombone and was an artist; my sister played piano; my brother was a musician; they were all talented.

"So when I came to the University, I said, 'Well, what's left?' And theatre was the only thing that was left of all these things. I took one course, and I understood that this is something I should do. The rest is history," Hedley recounts.

While he had the option of transferring into the Faculty of Arts, he chose instead to continue his studies in Education.

"I wanted to be a teacher all my life, absolutely. But the other reason I [stayed in] Education was because if I took a

BFA, I got three years. If I took a BEd, I got four years. And I wanted more theatre; I wanted to be [at the University] for four years. So that was why I did that," he says.

This decision served Hedley well. At first, he worked in the humble capacity as a substitute teacher here in Edmonton.

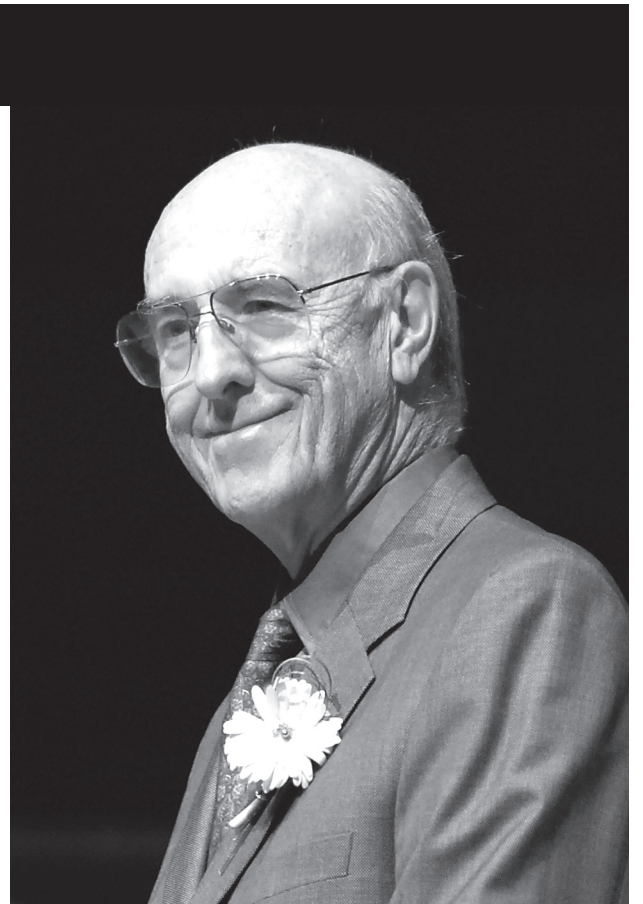
"I taught everything from girls' Phys Ed [to] French—not knowing any French, of course," Hedley admits.

From there, Hedley went on to found his own theatre company in Philadelphia. He's served as the theatre department chair for three separate universities in the United States, and is also the former director of the world-renowned Iowa Playwrights' Workshop.

However, Hedley considers the achievements of his students to be his greatest success, and believes that the process of getting an education helps build self-esteem.

"Most of these schools, you go through your undergraduate and wonder what the job will be for you—whether you will have a career. But [the Faculty of Education] made me feel that, yes, I would be something, and I would probably do well. To give somebody confidence like that, that's invaluable. It really is."

—Bryan Saunders



ALUMNI HONOR AWARD RECIPIENT **CONNIE KALDOR** graduated from the U of A with a Bachelor in Fine Arts in 1975, and began her career soon afterwards as one of Canada's celebrated performers.

The award recognizes contributions made over a number of years by University of Alberta Alumni in their local communities and beyond. Kaldor figures hers is a result of her survival as an artist.

"There's a moment in every artist's life where they realize that they're going to have to disappoint their parents," Kaldor admits about her choice to leave Regina and pursue theatre. The U of A helped shape her future, she says, and recalling being an aspiring artist in Edmonton.

"When I came to the U of A, there was a boom on. You could not find an apartment for love or money," she recalls.

Like many students today, Kaldor struggled to find affordable housing. Her first apartment had a sink that drained into a pail, and at one point, she shared a house with six guys who made their own beer.

Living conditions aside, Kaldor loved honing her theatrical craft. She was honoured to be admitted into one of the few reputable theatre programs in the city at the time, and she left a lasting impression.

Acting roles for women were sparse during her university days, Kaldor notes, so the girls in her year formed a touring

theatre troupe—"Bazoomba Theatre," named after a male acquaintance's scandalous vocabulary for female anatomy.

After graduating, Kaldor started her search for a Canadian theatre scene, but it was hard to come by. So she turned to her other love: music.

"I wanted to do theatre, but if I could never do music again, that was untenable for me. I could work my theatre into my music," she explains.

With her strong Edmonton roots, Kaldor's start as a singer came at the Folk Fest.

"That's how you get your audience," she explains, saying that she jumped at the chance to be a female singer with something different and inspired to share with the musical community.

Three Juno awards and 13 records later, Kaldor is still in love with performing, singing, and songwriting—though she hasn't forgotten where she came from, returning to play this summer's Folk Fest as well.

"It's one of those great joys. If I can just get rid of laundry and taxes, I'd be totally happy every minute of my life," she jokes.

It's this passion that has Kaldor hoping for little change in her vocation as she gets older.

"I just want to perform. I want to be 90 and still doing it."

—Kirsten Goruk

