



Labor Day Parade

PO Box 746

Newtown, CT 06470

49th Newtown Labor Day Parade "On Stage In Newtown"

2010 Grand Marshal

Marge Rogers

Courtesy of the Newtown Bee

Veteran Theater Volunteer Will Lead The Way For 49th Annual Newtown Labor Day Parade By Nancy K. Crevier In a salute to Newtown's Town Players Little Theatre, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, the Newtown Labor Day Parade Committee has selected "On Stage In Newtown" as this year's parade theme. Bringing that theme to life on Monday, September 6, when the event follows its traditional route in the center of town, will be Grand Marshal Marge Rogers, a longtime Newtown resident and a member of the Town Players for 47 years.



"I was surprised to be asked. It's quite an honor and I certainly do appreciate it," said Ms Rogers, adding that she and her family have been "loyal parade attendees" since the tradition of the Labor Day Parade began. "So this is a big deal for me," she said.

A theater major at Skidmore College, Ms Rogers and her husband moved to Newtown in 1956.

"We attended the plays and I was so impressed," she recalled of her early days in town. But it was not until 1963 that her family life and schedule allowed her to join the community theater group. "I've been there ever since," said Ms Rogers.





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In the nearly five decades, Ms Rogers has watched the theater grow from a tiny cement block house on Orchard Hill, where actors dressed beneath a backyard tent and entered the stage through the exterior ticket window, to the cozy space it has become. She remembers a time prior to the second addition to the theater in the 1980s, when there was no running water and only an outhouse for comfort facilities.

As a volunteer with the theater group, Ms Rogers has served on the publicity committee; served as president for nine years; directed, produced, and acted in plays; overseen the children's theater; built sets; and been instrumental in moving the theater toward its recently acquired status as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

"I've done pretty much everything at some point," she said, "but that's what community theater is about."

Because so many of the women volunteers had children when she first joined The Town Players, the involvement became a family venture of sorts, said Ms Rogers. While mothers worked on sets and costumes, their young children played nearby. As the children got older, they helped with the sets, lighting, making posters and costumes, and assisted with the children's theater.

"Many of our children 'grew up' in the Little Theatre," she laughed.

Ms Rogers has many wonderful memories of her years with The Town Players, but a favorite is the year that the group produced Thurber Carnival.

"It has a musical score that was actually written by a guy I grew up with in New Jersey," said Ms Rogers. "It was a series of crazy little Thurber stories interspersed with music. I played the jazz score on the piano. We had a 'Thurber group' who just loved James Thurber. It was a lot of fun," she said.

The Town Players has frequently been a part of the Labor Day Parade, whenever preparations for fall productions do not interfere with participation.

"One year the children's theater did a play called The Bad Children, and all of the kids who were in it got to be in the parade. I had a rabbit, a witch, and lots of other fairy tale creatures marching down the street," Ms Rogers said. She also fondly recalled the summer that she trouped the entire children's theater group





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down to Dickinson Park to perform for the camp there. "We performed Circus in the Wind, and even had a live pig in that play. Children like to see other children performing, I think," she said.

The grand marshal has been thrilled with the talent that auditions for The Town Players productions, as well as with the directors who have chosen to work with the theater group.

"We have seen some fine acting," she commented.

The small size of the Orchard Hill theater puts the Town Players in a unique position, said Ms Rogers. "We seat only 70 audience members, so we can do things that a big theater can't do. The audience is practically in the play, and it's fun that way."

Marge Rogers is looking forward to representing The Town Players on September 6.

"It's amazing how fast the time has gone since I joined the Little Theatre," she said, "and to think of all the people who have come and gone. The Little Theatre is doing quite well already in this anniversary year. People enjoy something close to home that they can enjoy, and that is affordable. We've done some high quality work," she said.

