



You may know Martha Manning from theater groups, but what you may not know is that she did radio commercials and TV voice-overs and served as president of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists Washington-Baltimore.



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

GETTING TO KNOW MARTHA MANNING

Age: 81
Village: Bonnybrook
Spouse: Roger Blair
Family: two daughters, three stepchildren, two grandchildren
Moved Here In: 2013
Moved Here From: Nashville, Tennessee
Favorite Villages Activities: Resident theater, getting together with neighbors



Kristen Fiore

THE VILLAGES DAILY SUN

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When Martha Manning was a little girl, she would often round up her younger sisters and the neighborhood kids to put on a show. They'd turn over a picnic table and use stuffed animals and dolls to act things out. Other times, they'd put on plays in her mother's basement, using a sheet as the curtain.

"I was always the director," said Manning, of the Village of Bonnybrook.

Manning's love for theater and acting has never wavered. She went to the University of Mary Washington before transferring to American University, where she majored in Radio-TV-Theater. A few of her professors were in the business, and helped her start doing radio and TV commercials while she was in college.

Later, she was a member and the eventual president of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists

Washington-Baltimore local (AFTRA). She also was a member of the area Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and on the national board of both AFTRA and SAG.

Those organizations opened up many opportunities for Manning. Over the course of her career, she did more than 2,000 radio commercials and TV voice-overs as well as dozens of on-camera spots.

She did a voice-over for a film showed to the Navy and played the wife in a public service film about the dangers of mixing prescription and non-prescription drugs.

She also had many roles as a background player in larger movies, like Eddie Murphy's "The Distinguished Gentleman." Manning said Murphy was one of the nicest actors she shot with.

"He would come out and come over to talk to all the

background players," Manning said. "He'd say, 'Are they feeding you OK? Thank you for coming.'"

In the movie "Cry-Baby," Manning got to work with Johnny Depp, as she played the role of the evil nurse at the beginning of the film holding him down to administer a polio shot.

"That was before he was really anybody," Manning said. "He was a nice kid. John Waters directed it. He was wild to work with."

Another big moment in Manning's career was an American Film Institute gala at the Kennedy Center where Manning had to work backstage and direct big time movie stars like Cicely Tyson, Lily Tomlin, Elizabeth Taylor and more on where to go and what to do during the event. She remembers offering Taylor a cough drop, Lauren Bacall sweeping in and asking about

the teleprompter, Charlton Heston telling her he would be behind some flaps back stage so he could work on his script and Taylor grabbing her hand and asking where to stand.

"The bigger they were, the nicer they were," Manning said. She didn't get any autographs that day.

"I was working," she said. "Everyone was professional."

Manning also performed and directed in theater, and taught theater to children and teens at a performing arts school.

"Most of my best friends that I've known for a long time were theater friends that I met doing community theater or dinner theater," Manning said.

Additionally, Manning served on the Young Performers Committee, which led to her own children often being cast in commercials as well. Manning said she

never pushed them into it, but they inherited her flair for entertainment.

Manning's oldest daughter, Lisa Manning, has been a radio personality in Nashville for two decades. Her younger daughter, Lori Alan, is known for voicing Pearl Krabs on "SpongeBob SquarePants," Diane Simmons on "Family Guy" and more.

Martha moved to The Villages in 2013.

"I found that there was theater here, too," she said.

She now enjoys acting in and directing shows with local theater groups such as The Villages Theater Company, Lake Miona Theater Group, Melon Patch Theatre and more.

Some shows she's been involved in in The Villages include "The Music Man," "Morning's at Seven," "A Bad Year for Tomatoes" and "The Curious Savage."

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