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## Lee Harrod

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## Lee Harrod

By John F. Erath

My good friend, Lee Harrod, made his way from the prairie town of Gillette, Wyoming, through Nebraska (Hastings College) and Pennsylvania (Penn State, where he met his wife Lois) to finally come to us in Trenton, New Jersey (Trenton State College, now The College of New Jersey) in 1968, where he served as Professor of English. Lee chose to apply to our school because he wanted to teach at a place where most of the students were first-generation college students, as he had been. We chose him because we saw right off what he could bring to our department. In short order, we came to respect the broad spectrum of his knowledge (especially of Joyce), admire his enthusiasm in the classroom, and enjoy his gregarious personality.

In addition to teaching Shakespeare, I am President and Director of Shakespeare '70, a community theater company dedicated to performing the classics. A casual remark about needing actors for an upcoming production led to Lee spending more than 25 years working with us. He played a number of roles in our annual Summer Shakespeare shows, but his forte as an actor was the fatherly, elder statesman, a kind of Shakespearean senior citizen. We loved him as Polonius (*Hamlet*), old Adam (*As You Like It*), Leonato (*Much Ado*), Peter Quince (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), and in another classic, Mr. Hardcastle the beaming proprietor of Liberty Hall (*She Stops to Conquer*). At our cast parties, inspired, perhaps, by a bit of Guinness, he would sit down at the piano and rouse the crowd with his throaty version of "Hard-Hearted Hannah, the Vamp of Savannah."

For six years, Lee served as chair of our growing department. Though managing the needs and whims of twenty-five professors of English can be a bit dicey, his straightforward leadership kept us operating successfully. Of course, he never got far away from the classroom. His students, especially upper-level majors, loved him and his Joyce courses. When he retired, they independently organized a tribute: a non-stop reading of the text of *Ulysses*.

Lee and Lois loved traveling. They visited many places in the UK and Ireland (of course), France, Italy, and across the United States as well. They shared some of those journeys with many of us in the narrative and photos in their annual Christmas letter, always accompanied by some poetry from Lois. Speaking of the holiday, his famous plum pudding was a regular at our office celebration.

I taught with Lee for thirty-five years. There are very few like him: a superb teacher, a skilled mentor to students and young colleagues, and a devoted scholar.

—*The College of New Jersey*