They weren’t necessarily household names—Norman Hall ‘48, Sam Denoff ‘50, Phil Hymes ‘49, Lee Philips (formerly Leon Friedman), Jo Wilder (nee Joanne Brower), Roswell Bigelow ‘48, and Fanchon Scheier (nee Miller) ‘74—but the television, film, and theatre productions these Adelphi alumni contributed to are well known.

Longtime television and theatre director Norman Hall ‘48 won an Emmy for direction on One Life to Live. Samuel Denoff ’50, who passed away earlier this year, won four Emmys—two of which were for his writing on The Dick Van Dyke Show. Phil Hymes ‘49 is still the lighting director for Saturday Night Live. Lee Philips, who passed away in 1999, became famous for his lead role, alongside Lana Turner, in the 1957 film, Peyton Place. He went on to direct scores of television shows, including episodes of Peyton Place. Norm, as he was known, won four Emmys—two of which were for his writing on The Dick Van Dyke Show. Mr. Hall directed “Norman was so dynamic,” she says. According to Ms. Scheier, “It was a very exciting time at Adelphi because of the veterans. She came to Adelphi to study with Jack Thompson, a faculty member who had studied out in Hollywood at the Actors’ Laboratory. “He had absolutely revolutionary, exciting training, and I was just thrilled with his classes and his belief in me,” says Ms. Scheier.

Following graduation, Mr. Hall and Ms. Scheier, along with others, including Lee Philips, formed the Circle Theatre—one of the first arena theatres in New York City—where they produced plays. “We got nice reviews,” says Ms. Scheier. “But it never made a profit.”

Ms. Scheier fondly recalls seeing her friend, Mr. Philips, starring in Peyton Place. “I remember my friend…and I ran down to the theatre downtown, and we were just thrilled,” she says. “He was a terrific, terrific guy.”

Regardless, it was a fruitful time for the performing arts such as Mr. Denoff and his fellow alumni is hard to pinpoint. The College’s proximity to New York, its appeal to World War II veterans eager to move on with their lives, and its collegial and respectful drama department all likely played a role.

What made Adelphi a starting ground for theatre talents such as Mr. Denoff and his fellow alumni is hard to pinpoint. The College’s proximity to New York, its appeal to World War II veterans eager to move on with their lives, and its collegial and respectful drama department all likely played a role.

By Bonnie Eissner