

Allan Foster



Allan Foster, a longtime resident of Niskayuna and a familiar face to audiences of the Schenectady Light Opera Company and other regional theater groups, died March 18th at Ellis Hospital. The cause was sudden complications related to lymphoma. Over six decades beginning in 1957, Foster performed in hundreds of theatrical roles, bringing his strong tenor voice to many leading roles: Lieutenant Cable in South Pacific, Bill in Carousel, Tony in West Side Story were highlights. Foster also directed many productions, most significantly the local production of Harry Chapin's Lies and Legends which won numerous regional theater awards and represented the United States in the international amateur theater competition in Spain after it opened in Schenectady in 1989. Foster was born in Brooklyn to parents, Tom and Mabel, but the family ran into financial difficulties and moved back to Bristol, England where they lived during World War II. The family's house was damaged and eventually destroyed by Nazi bombing during that period. The family returned to Darien, CT after the war and he eventually enrolled at the Engineering College at Yale, graduating in 1954. He's been active in alumni activities at Yale, most recently being disappointed by Yale's lopsided defeat by Harvard in football last fall. He moved to Schenectady with his first wife, Marion, who died in 2004, after entering a Sputnik-era GE program for new engineers which allowed participants to work in four factories before selecting their preferred location. The couple chose the Capital District, and he made his home and entire career in Niskayuna. His career spanned both engineering and management positions in high temperature alloy metallurgy for the Gas Turbine division of GE, most importantly in leading what were then called the Rainbow Tests that led to multiple patents that remain central to core engineering improvements in GE's turbine design. Besides theater, Foster was very active in the Schenectady Wintersports Club as both a skier and avid paddler. He also has been a member of the Saratoga Lake Sailing Club since the 1970's, racing his Windmill in the open class regattas and winning Club championships several years with Marion as his crew. He enjoyed numerous annual canoe trips with the paddling group to U.S. and international destinations (particularly central Florida), both with his first wife and later with his second wife, Lois Foster. In recent years, Allan and Lois traveled extensively abroad and across the United States, often towing their beloved Scamp trailer along the way. Foster is survived by his wife, Lois of Albany; two sons, David of New York City and Glenn who lives in Seattle; grandson, Adam; and adopted sister, Debbie Whalen of South Carolina. Since his remarriage to Lois in 2005, he got great joy from his adopted Vargas family (Manny, Pam, Nelson, and Philip and their families) and particularly the grandchildren, all of whom he loved and enjoyed dearly. A memorial celebration is planned at SLOC for April 21 at noon, reception to follow. Donations in Allan's memory can be made to Schenectady Light Opera Company, 427 Franklin St., Schenectady, NY 12305. For on-line condolences please visit: www.simplechoicescremation.com.