

Tony Roberts



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Northwestern

Tony Roberts

Shari Sigman

1957, Tony Roberts was only one of nervous freshmen auditioning for the *Au* show. But he was one of the lucky ho made it—though in Roberts' case, it aite by accident.

"I went to the wrong audition. I wanted to singer, but accidentally went to the dancing unit audition," said the ur actor who is probably best known to its for his supporting roles in Woody films.

was only a freshman, and I was too ed to admit I was in the wrong place." ICE THEN, things have really charg- r Roberts. He's still friendly and ul, but he has the calmness that comes success.

graduated from NU in 1961, and unlike of his classmates, had little trouble fwork- guess my first break after graduation a this Broadway play, 'Something of a r.' It ran for two-and-a-half weeks. that I didn't do much of anything for a "

worked on daytime television for a few



Tony Roberts in the 1961 Waa-Mu show

years, and appeared in several off-Broadway shows. But landing the role of Axel McGee in Allen's "Don't Drink the Water," Allen's first Broadway hit, may have been the best break of all.

"IT'S A REAL privilege to work with someone who has so much vision, and concept,

and control," said Roberts, who himself seems controlled and relaxed during the tapings. "It's rare to have someone as professional as he is. He never loses his cool."

Roberts said that in working with Allen over the years, he has seen his progression from pure comedy to more serious films, such as "Interiors," and "Stardust Memories."

"At first, all he wanted was laughs. There was less emphasis on social messages," Roberts said. "And I was there to provide the comic relief."

Returning to Northwestern to perform in the Gala is a tremendous honor for Roberts.

IN FACT it seems ironic that someone who works with superstars like Allen—and is a star of his own right—would feel as honored as Roberts says he does to return to his alma mater.

"I was really flattered when they asked me to come back to do it. But I guess we all got out of here the same way, and we all had the same doubts.

"And I'm the nostalgic type," he said. Coming back and working with other performers who he hasn't ever met has also been a new experience for Roberts.

"There's a special feeling, a certain sense of having shared common roots," he said. "I don't think everyone is throwing their weight around like they might be in a commercial production.

"AND I THINK it's also beyond everyone's imagination that anything like this could ever take place."

As an undergraduate, who lived at McCulloch Hall and was a member of Tau Delta Phi fraternity, Roberts said he was more interested in University Theatre and Studio

productions than the well-publicized and flamboyant Waa-Mu shows.

"It was a luxury to be in Waa-Mu," said the actor, who twice appeared in the show. "It was like being a cheerleader or a pom-pom girl. It was more serious to work in School of Speech productions."

And there was also resentment over the large budget Waa-Mu received.

"TO THINK THAT all of that was done without even involving the theatre department. It wasn't art. We were more impressed with the person who had the lead in *Antigone* than the person who had the lead in *Waa-Mu*."

But Roberts left with fond memories of NU.

"I don't know that Northwestern itself did that much, it was only a name, a bunch of buildings. But the people I met and interacted with and learned from were tremendous, and in that sense, my Northwestern years were invaluable."

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Photo by Mitch Jordan

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