

A lifetime's legacy

by Holly HARVEY

After appearing in more than 60 films, 20 theatre productions, over 10 television shows and teaching for more than 20 years, most people would consider retirement, but not Collin College theatre professor Gail Cronauer.

An acclaimed actress who has appeared in films such as *Boys Don't Cry*, *Born on the Fourth of July* and *JFK*, Cronauer is a legend as well in the Dallas theatre circle and regularly appears in boundary-pushing plays.

"I tend to play characters who are survivors, warriors and worriers," emphasized Cronauer. "When you're able to really embody a character and their words, it feels like you're on a higher level—almost like you're touching God."

Cronauer's first experiences in acting came inadvertently by pretending to sleep all the way through naptime at school so she wouldn't have to be involved in activities. She started taking classes in dancing and

music soon after and performed in several high school drama productions.

"Being exposed to dance and music lifted me into a world that was larger than the everyday and felt extraordinary," Cronauer said.

While in college, Cronauer suffered a knee injury and took it as a sign that acting was going to be her career path. After starring in a college play, Cronauer had a transformative experience.

"I was in an anti-war play with



Photo: ABC



soldiers and peasant actors and it changed my life," Cronauer recalled. "It was an ensemble piece and at the end the cast members went out into the audience and actually touched the audience. Having that physical contact with an audience was incredible."

After receiving her degree, Cronauer began teaching acting and found her way to Collin College where she has taught classes for more than 20 years.

"I realized that in addition to acting, I wanted to be in a community of scholars and enlightenment, and teaching was a way to do that," she said. "I do my best to impact my students. Even if I have a student in my class that doesn't like acting, I tell them 'Just stick this class out—it will change your life.' And many of them told me this is true."

She teaches beginning and advanced acting courses in addition to directing plays at Collin College. But her collaboration with students extends outside the college as well,

as she's starred in a web series created by Collin College alumnus Scot Michael Walker.

She's become a legend on local Dallas theatre stage playing a number of unique character roles, such as performing in an all-female play of Shakespeare's *Richard III* or playing a Victorian adventurer in space. She especially enjoys performing plays written by women and people whose groups that are under-represented.

Still performing today, Cronauer revels in the challenges of playing a "woman-of-a-certain-age" role and has no plans of slowing down.

"As I reflect on my career, I look forward to many amazing experiences that in some way shine a light on the world and shine a light for yourself."

For more information about Collin College's theatre program, visit www.collintheatrecenter.com/home.htm. ❖

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