

C-HIST  
FIT

Fitzgerald, Fern.

Recognition ceremony in honor of Fern Fitzgerald /  
presentation of award by Village Trustee Paul Brown. -  
Valley Stream Historical Society, October 9, 1991.  
1 cassette.

NOTE: Recognition ceremony was held in the  
Keller Auditorium on October 9, 1991, honoring  
Broadway and Hollywood actress Fern Fitzgerald,  
Central High School Class of 1965.

1. Fitzgerald, Fern. 2. Valley Stream (N.Y.) -  
History. I. Valley Stream Historical Society.  
II. Brown, Paul. III. Title.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS:

1. Outline of Recognition Program - Prepared by Helen Dowdeswell.
2. Photograph of Fern Fitzgerald with  
October 9, 1991. \*
3. Letter from Arlene Hinkemeyer, dated October 1, 1991,  
inviting Helen Dowdeswell to the Recognition Program.
4. "Central Grad Honored," Valley Stream High School District  
Observer, September/October 1991, p. 4.
5. "Fern Fitzgerald" - Foot Loose and ... Column, by Jules  
Rabin, Maileader, Thursday, September 26, 1981, p. 10.

\*Original Photograph is filed in the Valley Stream Historical  
Photograph Collection.

VALLEY STREAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

FERN FITZGERALD - Oct. 9, 1991

Side 1            RECOGNITION CEREMONY OF FERN FITZGERALD AT CENTRAL HISH

1            Blank

6            Introduction

23           Dr. Marcia Knoll: Welcome & Introduction

~~186~~        Mr. Paul Brown, Village Trustee: Presentation of Award by Village

194        Dr. John Glynn, Remarks

211        Kristi Willis, Student Council President, Presentation

222        Fern Fitzgerald, Class of 19~~55~~<sup>65</sup>, well known actress of stage & T.V.

384        Dr. John Glynn, Principal: Closing remarks

400        End Assembly program

side 1 cont.

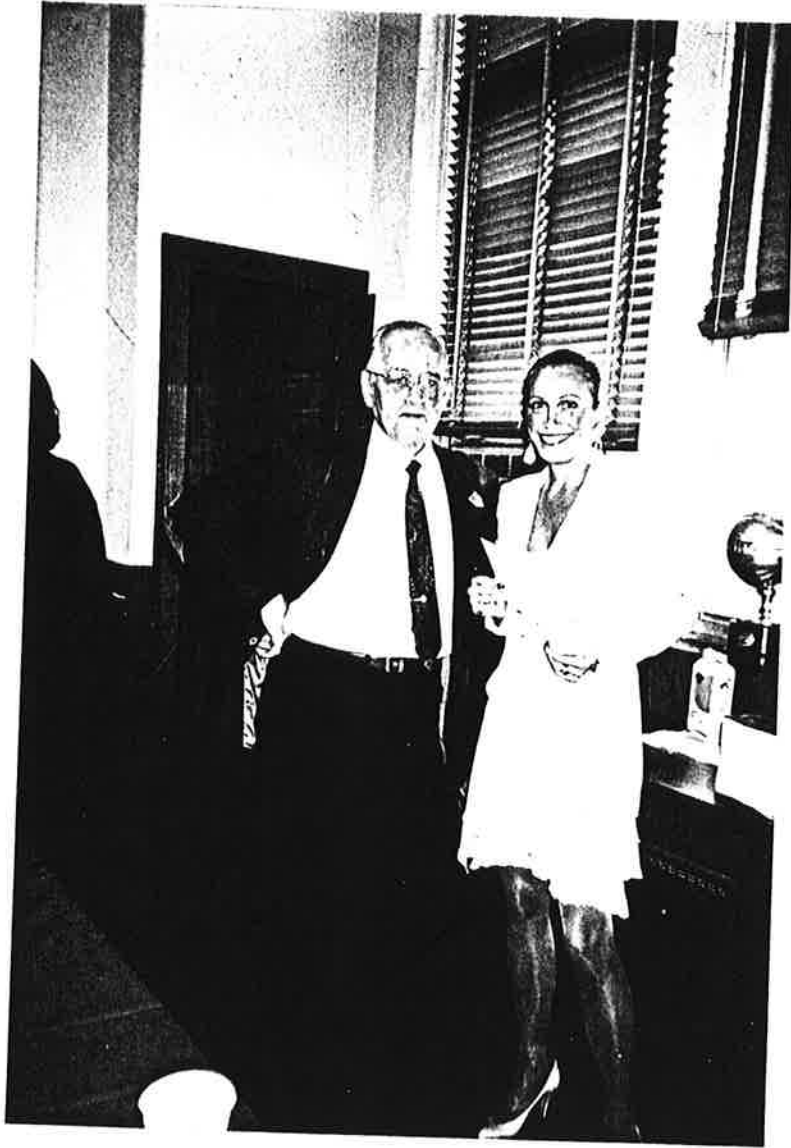
401        Fern talking to Drama students in Library about her life in  
            theatre, her advice on attempting a stage career

634        End Side 1

Side 2

1            Continuation of talk to Drama students

356        End



Fern Fitzgerald  
10/9/91

ARLENE HINKEMEYER

October 1, 1991

Dear *Helen*,

You are cordially invited to attend any or all of a series of events at Central High School on Wednesday, October 9, honoring Broadway and Hollywood actress Fern Fitzgerald, Central High School Class of 1965. This is the fifth in a series of programs co-sponsored by the Village of Valley Stream and honoring graduates of the Valley Stream schools.

The events planned for October 9 include:

- 9:45-10:15 a.m. A welcoming coffee in Central H.S. principal Dr. John Glynn's office
- 10:15-11:00 a.m. A fourth period assembly in Central's Keller Auditorium honoring Fern Fitzgerald
- 11:00-11:45 a.m. A fifth period seminar in the school library with Ms. Fitzgerald and students interested in the performing arts
- 11:45-12:30 p.m. A sixth period fingertip luncheon in the school library with Ms. Fitzgerald, selected students, staff, alumni, etc.

Please let me know what portion of these events you will be able to attend. We would love to have you there.

Sincerely,

*Arlene*

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COMMUNITY INFORMATION COORDINATOR  
VALLEY STREAM CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ONE KENT RD., VALLEY STREAM, NY 11582  
(516) 872-5605

# Central grad honored

Valley Stream High School District Observer • September/October 1991

Returning to her alma mater Central High School on October 9 for the fifth in a series of special assembly programs honoring graduates of the Valley Stream schools will be star of the stage and screen, Fern Fitzgerald, Class of 1965. The assembly will take place in Central's Keller Auditorium during fourth period, 10:15-11:00 a.m. Community members are most welcome to attend.

Fern Fitzgerald, a Talent Troupe dancer, extraordinaire while at Central, a Streamers captain, and the choreographer for high school productions such as "The King and I" and "The Music Man," graduated from Central and went on to a dancing and acting career on Broadway and in Hollywood. Credits include the role of Sheila in the Broadway, Los Angeles and Chicago productions of "A Chorus Line" and guest appearances on numerous television shows including "Life Goes On," "Dallas," "Hunter," "Who's the Boss," "Silver Spoons," and "Hart to Hart."

"I am delighted to be considered for your special program honoring past graduates of Central High School," she wrote last spring from her home in California. "I recently returned to Long Island to celebrate the reunion of the Class of '65 and realized what a special group of people we had at



FERN FITZGERALD

a magnificent school."

Previous honorees at the Central High School assemblies have included newscasters Ralph Penza and Mike Schneider; nationally-known advertising sales director Peter Spina; New York Times president Lance Primis; and former professional baseball player Thomas Gorman.

The programs honoring these graduates have traditionally been co-sponsored by the Village of Valley Stream.

## Fern Fitzgerald

"I did my first recital, solo, mind you, at three years old and never dreamed it would lead to Broadway and then Hollywood!" says the ebullient Fern Fitzgerald. "And to work with people I admired in my youth! It's a little heady, don't cha think?"

As a student at Memorial Junior High in Valley Stream, Fern Fitzgerald had the chance to take a class trip to New York City to see Chita Rivera in "Bye, Bye Birdie." Fern remembers it like it was yesterday. "When Chita was singing and dancing, I was truly mesmerized! I can recall saying, 'I want to be that lady!' But who knew I'd get to do my first Broadway show with her?"

The show was Bob Fosse's Chicago. Fern had the role of "Go-To-Hell-Kitty" and loved every minute of it. But before that stint, she danced with the world famous Radio City Music Hall Rockettes.

Between the time she danced with the Rockettes and did the show Chicago, Fern worked in community theatre in Westchester. She choreographed and performed in Li'l Abner and Fiorello. She also held down some "real people" jobs, working at an advertising agency, a color lab, IBM, and managing the Gaslight Club in Manhattan. "After Radio City, I started to audition for Broadway and didn't care for most of the people I met. Perhaps I was just too naive. I don't know. But I'm so glad I had all of those experi-

## FOOT LOOSE AND...

by Jules Robin, President of Jules Robin Associates



ences, because it gave me a slant on the real world. This show business stuff can keep one in a vacuum of "fantasy land," if you know what I mean?"

After nine months of Chicago, Michael Bennett asked her to audition for A Chorus Line. "What a dream of a part!" Fern played "Sheila," who sings the moving song, "At The Ballet." "There was so much about the role that I could identify with. I'd love to do it again," she sighs. And what a terrific show it was for Broadway. Fern helped celebrate a Chorus Line, as the longest running Broadway musical, in 1983. The show closed last year on Broadway but continues to be performed all over the world.

"One day, Michael (Bennett) called me to his office and said he had a proposition to make. He wanted me to go to Los Angeles and finish the run of the show with the original cast that had been out there for a year or so. Part of the package was that I open 'Chorus Line' in the city of Chicago. Well! Why not? I could take California weather in the Fall. Of course, I hadn't thought about Chicago in the Winter," Fern laughs. "I don't regret any part of the deal, because I met my husband, Tom Sweet, in Chicago. And ya know what? Chicago's a fabulous town and not the least bit cold when you fall in love."

After finishing her contract, she

decided to move to California for good. Tom also came back to California, his home state, and they were married, eleven months after they met. "Marrying Tom was really the best thing I've ever done in my life," Fern says sincerely. "Everyone loves Tom, but not as much as I."

Once in Los Angeles, Fern was lucky finding a commercial agent and started to film commercials immediately. Because the agency had a small television division, she worked with them theatrically, too, and got her first television job as an actress on the hit show Dallas. Fern played the wealthy oil baroness "Marilee Stone." "Who would guess that I'd be on TV all over the world, speaking many different languages," Fern says incredulously.

Fern likes television for a number of reasons. For the most part, actors only work weekdays, it's more lucrative and leaves more time for family and friends. And since Fern and Tom love to cook together, they get to entertain their family and friends, which they truly enjoy.

Since Dallas, Fern has guest starred on many TV shows, including Archie Bunker's Place, Hunter, Hooperman, Life Goes On, Who's The Boss?, and Silver Spoons, to name just a few. She continues to do a wide variety of TV commercials. "I can be a real chameleon," says



FERN FITZGERALD

Fern. "And when you're doing commercials, that's very important.

"This is a rough business, especially if you're not related to someone in the business. There are times I wish Tom was a producer or a director, 'cause it would sure help. And, then again, there must be a reason that I have to make it on my own. I'd really like to have my own series. I love comedy, but I may have to write my own sitcom, because today's sitcoms aren't my cup of tea. Who knows what direction my career will take? I'm learning to be grateful for the life I've had so far and look forward to the adventure of just living.

One gets a sense of serenity, but not complacency from this lady. She knows where she came from and seems to look forward, with anticipation, to what lies ahead. Good luck, Fern. We hope to see you in your own series some day!