

A tradition continues in Sunday's "Tonys"

By Steven Alan McGaw
 The first Antoinette Perry, or Tony, awards were presented on April 6, 1947, in the ballroom of New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Serving as host was Vera Allen. Perry's successor as chairwoman of the American Theatre Wing, the awards' sponsor, and entertainment was provided by Ethel Waters, Mickey Rooney and David Wayne. On Sunday, May 31, CBS will air "The 46th Annual Tony Awards" from the stage of the Gershwin Theatre in New York City. Glenn Close, a Tony-winner in 1984 for "The Real Thing" and nominated again this year for her performance in "Death and the Maiden," will serve as host for the awards, and celebrities likely to appear in the show include Broadway veterans Hal Linden, Linda Lavin, Carol Channing, Patti Lupone and

Matthew Broderick. Among the nominees are Gregory Hines ("Jelly's Last Jam"), Jane Alexander ("The Visit"), Alan Alda ("Jake's Women") and Judd Hirsch ("Conversations With My Father"), all of whom will probably attend the prestigious ceremony designed to honor Broadway's best. The American Theatre Wing has served the community in a variety of ways since 1917, a full 30 years before the first Tony was handed out. The group first coalesced as Stage Women's War Relief, designed to aid the war effort (and they did, selling over \$10 million in Liberty Bonds); men joined the group in 1920. The Wing's ranks swelled during World War II, and its projects diversified, from entertaining troops with the stage, radio and film versions of "State Door Canteen" to establishing a

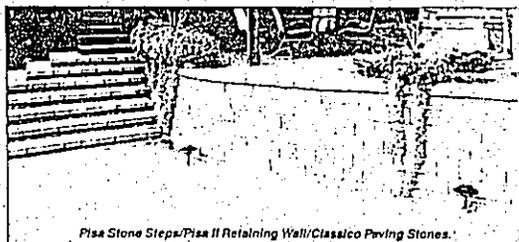
regular cadre of volunteers to contribute time and good cheer to hospitals housing returning veterans.

Peacetime brought a new agenda. For many years, the Wing operated a school, training vets and others in all areas of the theater. Former students included Charlton Heston and James Whitmore. Ray Bolger, Alfred Lunt and Martha Graham lent their skills as instructors. And always, the Wing has worked to nurture the theater for the participants and the public.

"To serve the community, that's the point," says Isabelle Stevenson, the Wing's president since 1966. Stevenson believes the Wing meets the challenge with a variety of programs. "Our hospital program, for instance, sends live, professional

Please turn to Page 5

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