

## About The Author

To be a contract dancer during the golden age of movie musicals was "akin to being on intimate terms with the gods and goddesses of movieland ... Gene Kelly, Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse, Esther Williams, Van Johnson, Hedy LaMarr, Lana Turner, Judy Garland ... tripping the light fantastic on Mt. Olympus ... namely, MGM Studios."

The above quote comes from Nostalgia magazine, Sept./Oct. 1988, from an article by the late Joan Woodbury, a well-known Hollywood actress who was formerly married to Henry Wilcoxon. The article, in part, goes on to say:

For seven glamorous, terpsichorean years, Norman Borine danced in every great musical released by the roaring lion. Beginning at the low end of the chorus line, Borine went on to become a \$1,000 a week in-demand, front -and center dancer who never had to leave Hollywood for greener pastures.

"When I was eight, I knew I wanted to be an entertainer" began the tall, blonde, perennial youth. "In college, I read the life of the great Nijinsky and decided I wanted to be a dancer." Hollywood was his destination, where he would learn from some of the greatest names in classical and modern dance, including Ruth St. Denis, Adolph Bolm, Serge Oukrainsky, (former partner of Pavlova), Lester Horton, David Lichine, and Bronislava Nijinska, sister of the one-and-only Nijinsky. "It seems more than a coincidence," says Norman, "that Nijinsky (in spirit) caused me to become a dancer. Some years later his sister turned out not only to be one of my teachers, but also the individual who sent me on my first movie interview and shortly thereafter signed a letter which enabled me to become a member of the Screen Actors Guild. From that day, I was never without work."

Nijinska's letter to the Guild allowed Norman to begin his exciting career at Universal Studios in *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, starring the glamorous Maria Montez, Jon Hall, and Turhan Bey. He remained there for two more musicals, one starring the young Susanna Foster; the other, *Yvonne De Carlo*, choreographed by Tilly Losch, brought from London primarily to appear with Gregory Peck and Jennifer Jones in the dramatic epic, *Duel in the Sun*. Following those three films, Norman moved over to Paramount, where he appeared in *Incendiary Blonde* with Betty Hutton.

Almost immediately, the two became close friends and Betty introduced Norman to Raoul Pene Du Bois, well-known New York City costume and set designer, who in turn introduced him to Robert Alton, Broadway choreographer with five hit -musicals running concurrently. He'd recently been lured from stage to movies by MGM, who signed him to the longest and highest salaried contract ever presented to a choreographer. It was he who offered Norman a seven-year contract, having never even seen him dance.

"When Raoul and Betty both recommended him, that was good enough for me," Alton said later. "Furthermore, when I needed someone to partner Cyd Charisse in her first film, *Ziegfeld Follies*, I picked Norman from all of the contract dancers because he and Cyd had worked in classes under Nijinska. Together, they were perfect."

When asked who impressed him more than any star he ever danced with, Norman did not hesitate for a split-second. "Judy Garland", he replied. "My first experience working with her was in *Till the Clouds Roll By* (the story of Jerome Kern). During the entire time, she was carrying Liza. Later, I was in rehearsal on another number the very first time Judy and Vincente walked proudly into the hall to show her off to all of us. It was a great moment, though no one could foretell the future which lay ahead for this special little girl." Years later, Norman and Judy were to work together again at Warner Brothers Studio, in the re-make of an old Janet Gaynor film, *A Star is Born*.

Leaving MGM in 1950, Norman appeared in five Broadway shows during the summer at the famous outdoor Greek Theatre in Hollywood, followed by three months at the Curran Theatre in San Francisco with Gertrude Niesen in the road show of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.

When the season was over, Norman planned to go to New York to find work, but suddenly one morning while preparing for the trip, the phone rang and a beautiful but unfamiliar voice said, "Norman, this is Eleanor Powell. Would it be possible to have breakfast with me tomorrow morning to discuss a new TV show, *Faith of Our Children*," I'll be doing for

NBC? I saw your work on another channel last week and I'd love to have you as choreographer."

"That experience over the next two years," Norman says, "was the happiest work of my life. Yes, we not only met and had breakfast in a small restaurant at Sunset and Vine, but walked immediately afterward to NBC (at that time, right on the corner) where I signed a contract. From that moment on, Ellie and I became like sister and brother. At the end of two years, the show had won five Emmy Awards and we were ecstatic."

Norman eventually moved to Palm Springs, California. He said, "I've been a dreamer all my life, and it worked. Now, with people like Deepak Chopra and others including my very dear friend, Dr. Ann Martin who helps us better understand ourselves, not only with creativity, but with longevity, I'm realizing more each year that I have a very unique and fascinating story to tell. It's once again: LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION! So, if it's going to be, it's up to me, and I know the audience is waiting."

Norman Borine passed away November 27, 2005.

See TV Interview with Norman Borine and Dr. Ann Martin

See TV Interview and Review of Norman's life