

VAN JOHNSON

Van Johnson was born in Newport, Rhode Island, August 25, son of Charles E. and Loretta Johnson. His father was a real estate salesman and it was his earnest hope that his son would follow in his business footsteps.

The boy Van, however, was intent from the start on show business as a career. When road companies played in Newport, Van was always one of those jammed in the gallery to watch the magic performances. Afterwards he would assemble his friends and stage a miniature version of the show in his back yard.

At Rogers High School he was a good student and a better-than-average football player. But as an actor -- well, the school dramatic coach just couldn't see him. Van tried out for each play, but never succeeded in making the grade.

After graduation from high school, there was talk of attending Brown University in nearby Providence. But he knew by then that he wanted to go on the stage, and as far as he was concerned, there was only one place to get the proper education for that -- New York. His father persuaded him to wait a year, hoping he might give up the idea. That year he spent working in his Dad's office. But when it was up he was just as determined as ever to make the theater his career.

So, off to New York he went. For a long time he haunted the theatrical agencies. After several months and just when it seemed his father was right, that the stage was not for him, he landed a job in the chorus of a musical show called "New Faces."

After the run of that show there was another lean period, during all of which Van was studying, studying, studying -- acting, singing and dancing. He took a job singing with a vaudeville act and went on tour. Then he became one of the famous Eight Men of

Manhattan and with them sang and danced at the elegant Rainbow Room.

He went into the Broadway musical success, "Too Many Girls" in 1940, and the following year had a small role in "Pal Joey." In this same show he understudied the lead, Gene Kelly.

He left "Pal Joey" to accept a screen contract, but the studio with which he signed dropped him after six months, during which he had made one picture, "Murder in the Big House."

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, however, saw something in Van Johnson which others had not. They saw him as the typical American boy and, as such, he was signed and given a role in "The War Against Mrs. Hadley."

The rest is screen history. Van made two Dr. Gillespie pictures, followed by featured roles in "A Guy Named Joe," "Madame Curie," "Two Girls and a Sailor" and "The Human Comedy." In "Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo" he achieved stardom. Then came, among others, "The White Cliffs of Dover," "Thrill of a Romance," "No Leave, No Love," and "Easy to Wed."

After that Van gave even more proof of his diversified acting ability, in "High Barbaree," "State of the Union," and "Command Decision." In "Scene of the Crime" he portrayed a hard-boiled police detective. In "Battleground," epic of the historic defense of Bastogne, he portrays a typical G.I. In "The Big Hangover," he is an idealistic young law student. He teamed with Esther Williams for the first time since "Thrill of a Romance," in the new Technicolor musical "Duchess of Idaho," and followed this with starring roles in "Grounds for Marriage," with Kathryn Grayson and "Three Guys Named Mike," with Jane Wyman.

On January 25, 1947, Johnson married Eve Abbott Wynn, and their daughter, Schuyler Van Johnson, was born January 6, 1948.

Today he is regarded as one of the most successful Hollywood stars in box-office draw. His fan mail has soared to stratospheric heights.

STATISTICS

Born, Van Johnson, August 25, Newport, R.I. Parents, Charles and Loretta Johnson. Educated, public schools, Newport. Height, six feet, two inches. Weight, 185 pounds. Hair, red. Eyes, blue. Married Eve Abbott Wynn, January 25, 1947. Their child, a daughter, Schuyler Van Johnson, born January 6, 1948. Occupations: stenographer, bookkeeper, dancer, actor.

STAGE: "New Faces," 1937; vaudeville with Buster West and Lucille Page; with "Eight Men of Manhattan," starring Mary Martin, at the Rainbow Room; "Too Many Girls," 1940; "Pal Joey," 1941.

SCREEN: "Murder in the Big House," 1941; "The War Against Mrs. Hadley," "Pilot No. 5," "Dr. Gillespie's New Assistant," "Dr. Gillespie's Criminal Case," "The Human Comedy," "A Guy Named Joe," "Madame Curie," 1943; "Two Girls and a Sailor," "Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo," "Three Men in White," "The White Cliffs of Dover," "Between Two Women," "Thrill of a Romance," 1944; "Week-End at the Waldorf," 1945; "Easy to Wed," "No Leave, No Love," 1946; "Till the Clouds Roll By," "High Barbaree," "The Romance of Rosy Ridge," "The Bride Goes Wild," "State of the Union," 1947; "Command Decision," "Mother Is a Freshman," 1948; "In the Good Old Summertime," "Scene of the Crime," "Battleground," "The Big Hangover," "Duchess of Idaho," 1949; "Grounds for Marriage," "Minister At Washington" ("It's a Big Country"), "Three Guys Named Mike," 1954.