

From Harry Brand
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B I O G R A P H Y

Of

ANN SHERIDAN

Cinderella stories to the contrary, Ann Sheridan's career hasn't been all mink coats and caviar since she arrived in Hollywood as a beauty contest winner in 1933.

There was a period in her life, glossed over by biographers as "18 months of free-lancing," during which occasional checks from an older sister kept Ann eating regularly. The sister, considerate of Ann's pride, always earmarked them for new hats. Only fierce determination to prove that there was more to her than that which met the eye in a bathing suit, and to live up to her family's confidence in her, prevented Ann from boarding a train for home as just another beautiful girl who couldn't make the grade in Hollywood.

She appeared in only one picture during that year and a half, Universal's "Fighting Youth." But her work in the film brought her a role with Pat O'Brien and Humphrey Bogart in "The Great O'Malley," which resulted in a long-term contract at Warner Bros.

Of the 30 contest winners (15 girls, 15 boys) who were brought to Hollywood by Paramount to appear in the picture, "The Search for Beauty," Ann Sheridan is the only one who achieved stardom and the only one who remains active in Hollywood today.

Of Scotch - Irish ancestry with a strain of Cherokee Indian, Ann was born in Denton, Texas, on Feb. 21, the fifth child (four girls, one boy) of Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Sheridan. She was named Clara Lou for an Aunt Clara and for her mother, who before her marriage to Sheridan was Lulu Stewart Warren of the distinguished Warren family of Virginia. Through her father, Ann is kin to General Phil Sheridan; he was her grandfather's uncle.

Though Ann's early home life had the rollicking flavor natural to a large family, the Sheridan children followed strict rules of behavior. Mrs. Sheridan believed that girls should have domestic accomplishments, and hers were taught to cook and sew. The latter, however, was beyond the patience of her youngest.

Pauline, just older than Ann, was her pal. Mabel, who later sent "new hat" money to Ann in Hollywood, was the motherly one to whom small Clara Lou ran with her troubles.

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At the Robert E. Lee grammar school, Ann embraced education as a delightful pursuit. It was not until a few years had passed that she realized that she thus had regarded it because of devotion to her first teacher, a Miss Bradley. Miss Bradley was young, Ann remembers, with red hair like Ann's own, a hot temper, but with a sense of humor and a soul-warming smile.

Ann was an excellent student, especially good at history and arithmetic. But when she encountered a teacher with an abrupt manner who fancied herself as a disciplinarian, the girl took a down-right unfriendly view of learning. Besides hating regimentation, she dreaded scoldings -- particularly the indignity of those delivered before fellow classmates. Only the administration of an old-fashioned and evil-tasting medicine broke Ann of playing hooky.

She played tennis, basketball, baseball and football with almost as much skill as the boys. "And," she recalls, "I had one of the finest collections of aggies in the state of Texas." Ann won them, of course.

When Ann enrolled at the North Texas State Teacher's College, she was motivated solely by a desire to follow in the footsteps of a favorite sister -- not by any deep and abiding desire to instruct the young. The prescribed art course, it turned out, was a repetition of work she felt she had long since outgrown, so she replaced her art with a class in dramatics.

Besides her work in the little theatre, Ann soon began singing with the school orchestra. Occasionally her imagination gingerly touched a possible stage career in New York, but it never flirted with the idea of Hollywood and motion pictures.

During her sophomore year there was talk on campus about a beauty contest being conducted by a motion picture studio. At home, her sister Kitty urged Ann to submit photographs. Ann was scornful--she would not become a subject for ridicule at school by being an entrant.

Ann, Kitty and their mother, made a shopping excursion to Dallas. In the late afternoon, they stopped at the Palace Theatre to see a picture. A trailer for the "Search for Beauty" contest came on the screen with the information that entrance blanks could be secured in the lobby. Unknown to Ann, Kitty provided herself with a blank.

That night in the Denton mail was an envelope containing a snapshot taken the previous summer of Ann in a bathing suit, and a portrait made a year or so before.

Several weeks later, John Rosenfield, drama editor of the Dallas News, and Texas arbiter of the beauty search, telephoned her to report to the Hotel Adolphus in Dallas for a screen test.

Though she had learned earlier, through seeing her photographs in his paper, that Kitty had entered her in the contest, the essence of her reaction to Rosenfield's call was, "This is a joke." He convinced her that it was not, and advised her to bring with her a bathing suit and an evening gown, regulation attire for all of the feminine contestants.

Her sister Kitty accompanied her. Ann was one of 36 semi-finalists from that area. The judges were seven newspapermen. As costume for their first appearance, the girls were asked to don bathing suits. The second appearance -- occasion for the wearing of the evening gowns -- never came.

Ann, in recounting the event, says, "I had to walk, sit down, pick up a book, rise again, turn around and then speak into the microphone. I was so nervous that all I could think of to say was 'My name is Clara Lou Sheridan. I live in Denton, Texas, and I'm very happy to be in this contest.' In speaking of my mental state, I could not have said anything further from the truth. I was self-conscious and miserably frightened, and sincerely wished I was any place except in that room in the Hotel Adolphus."

More weeks elapsed. Then came another telephone call from John Rosenfield. "Congratulations, Clara Lou," he said, "You're to go to Hollywood."

Ann was 17. Mrs. Sheridan had not minded the contest too much, and she was not averse to her daughter being recognized by others as a beauty. But neither did she relish the idea of Ann's becoming an actress - a possible outgrowth of a trip to Hollywood. Teaching had been an entirely different matter, a polite and remunerative occupation for a young lady in that period between school and marriage. Ann's father looked at it differently.

"Sukie," he told her, "go, and whatever you do, do it well. Someday I'll see your name in lights."

Paramount studio signed the winners to run-of-the-picture contracts. When the film, "The Search for Beauty," was completed, the option was exercised by the studio for Ann, one other girl, and four of the boys.

Ann remained under contract to Paramount for two years. She played in a number of western pictures opposite Randolph Scott, was given a substantial role in "Car 99" opposite the then-unknown Fred MacMurray, and appeared in several other pictures with such established stars as Richard Arlen and Gary Cooper.

Then came those 18 months in her career which are politely referred to as "free-lancing." Few picture-makers would believe that a beauty-contest winner could be an actress. She made up for this inactivity, however, by appearing in 26 pictures during her first two years under contract to Warner Bros.

In 1941, as Randy in "Kings Row," Miss Sheridan's name not only went up in lights, but she was hailed as a highly talented dramatic actress by critics and audiences alike. Her beloved father was not there to see it. He died in 1939. Mrs. Sheridan, who not only was reconciled to her daughter's career, but came to take great pride in her achievement, died in 1946.

Ann's three sisters are married and still live in Texas: Kitty in Fort Worth, Mabel in Waco and Pauline in Sherman. Her brother George lives in Denton.

Few persons have changed so little with success as has Ann Sheridan. She still loves laughter, abhors regimentation. Enjoys ballet, opera, and symphony music as much as she does rhumbas, baseball and bull fights. Her taste in books is equally varied.

She enjoys luxury -- beautiful clothes, jewelry, fine furs -- and has twice been named among the "Ten Best Dressed" women of the year. However, she does not keep a personal maid with her on the set when she is working in a picture. She drives her own car.

As a child in Texas, she learned to speak Spanish, and through subsequent trips to Mexico she has come to love the country and its people. She now neighbors with them by several visits across the border each year.

Mexicans, returning her affection, address her by the diminutive, Anita, and have made her an honorary citizen of her country. The residents of Nautla, a village near Vera Cruz presented her with a small piece of land a few years ago. Some day she hopes to build a part-time home there or near Mexico City. When Miguel Aleman was inaugurated as president, Ann was officially invited to attend the ceremony and festivities which followed it. She treasures a capote (the cape worn by the bull fighter for the promenade of the arena before he meets the bull) which was sent to her by the famed matador, Chiquelin.

Her Southern California home is a five-acre farm in Encino. The house is small, with only two bedrooms plus living quarters for the couple who perform all household and farm duties -- Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bewick. A stable is occupied by two horses, a cow (named Clara Lou) and a calf. Ann's household pets are two French poodles and a canary.

Miss Sheridan was married to George Brent in 1942 and divorced from him a year later. She had previously been married to and divorced from Eddie Norris.

VITAL STATISTICS

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| Birthday: | Feb 21 | Birthplace: | Denton, Texas |
| Height: | 5 ft. 6 inches | Weight: | 120 pounds |
| Hair: | Red Gold | Eyes: | Hazel |

PICTURES

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|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| - THE GREAT O'MALLEY | - SING ME A LOVE SONG |
| BLACK LEGION | SAN QUENTIN |
| - ALCATRAZ ISLAND | FOOTLOOSE HEIRESS |
| WINE, WOMEN AND HORSES | SHE LOVED A FIREMAN |
| MYSTERY HOUSE | THE PATIENT IN ROOM 18 |
| LITTLE MISS THOROUGHbred | COWBOY FROM BROOKLYN |
| BROADWAY MUSKETEERS | - ANGELS WITH DIRTY FACES |
| THEY MADE ME A CRIMINAL | DODGE CITY |
| NAUGHTY BUT NICE | INDIANAPOLIS SPREEWAY |
| ANGELS WASH THEIR FACES | WINTER CARNIVAL |
| CASTLE ON THE HUDSON | IT ALL CAME TRUE |
| TORRID ZONE | THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT |
| CITY FOR CONQUEST | - HONEYMOON FOR THREE |
| NAVY BLUES | THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER |
| LINGS ROW | JUKE GIRL |
| WINGS FOR THE EAGLE | GEORGE WASHINGTON SLEPT HERE |
| EDGE OF DARKNESS | THANK YOUR LUCKY STARS |
| SHINE ON HARVEST MOON | ONE MORE TOMORROW |
| THE DOUGHGIRLS | NORA PRENTISS |
| - THE UNFAITHFUL | I WAS A MALE WAR BRIDE |
- Twentieth-Century-Fox