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Article Summary: The least known of the great Hollywood stars from Nebraska is the versatile Robert Taylor. Robert Taylor appeared in eighty motion pictures and television films from 1934 to 1969, starred in one weekly television series and hosted another. He narrated two Academy Award-winning feature length documentaries, was the lowest-paid contract player in Hollywood history in 1934 and was under contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer for twenty-five years.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Fred Astaire, Montgomery Clift, Dorothy McGuire, Nick Nolte, James Coburn, Ruth Etting, "Hoot" Gibson, David Janssen, Darryl F Zanuck, Marlon Brando, Sandy Dennis, Henry Fonda, Harold Lloyd, Robert Taylor, Jane Ellen Wayne, Ed Sullivan, Barbara Stanwyck, Ursula Schmidt Thiess, Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, Spangler Andrew Brugh, Ruth Adela stanhope, Arlington Brugh, Preston Gass, Earl Jamison, A L Stanhope, Effie Jamison, Earl Jamison, Charles Jamison, Eva Jamison, Anthy Tyser, Rose Tyser Shimerda, Jeanne Barger St John, Esther Heffelfinger Dockhorn, Herbert E Gray, B P Osborn, Emanuel Wishnow, Frank E Lenhart, Don Abbott, Herbert Jackson, Gerhart Wiebe, C B Dempster, Paul Drew, Robert Marvin, Nelda Brugh, Esther Legate Aller, Mary Ellen Inglis, C Burdette Wolfe, Russell Gibson, H H Johnson, George C Kister, Roland Schaffert, Ida L Ehrlich, Philip Barry, William Harkins, Evelyn Overman Morrison, Estel Spadt, Eva Spadt, Kathryn Bender Boekel, Kathryn Bender Boekel, Robert Ross, R C Sheriff, Oliver Hinsdell, Louis G Mayer, Will Rogers, Lewis Beach, Wallace Beery, Arvid Eyth, Arthur Storz, William Martin, Bob Tyser, Flossie Tyser, George Kister, Ronald Reagan, Clark Gable; Cecelia Yost, Kathryn Bender, Margaret Finney, Beth Naden; Ben Piazza

Place Names: Hollywood, California; Filley, Nebraska; Beatrice, Nebraska; Gage County, Nebraska; Rockford Township, Nebraska; Kirksville, Missouri; Muskogee, Oklahoma; Fremont, Nebraska; Ellis, Nebraska; Big Blue River; Chautauqua Park; Wilber, Nebraska; Claremont, California; Lincoln Nebraska; Crete, Nebraska; Clay Center, Nebraska; Marshalltown, Iowa; Culver City, California; Brentwood, California; Omaha, Nebraska; Grand Island, Nebraska; North Platte, Nebraska; Holmesville, Nebraska; Glendale, California; Lake Okoboji, Iowa

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Paddock Hotel; Ducklore Lodge; Armistice Day; *Above and Beyond;* Blackstone Hotel; Strategic Air Command; Doctor of Humane Letters; Nebraska-Colorado; Nebraska Game and Parks Commission; Nebraska Broadcasters Association; Multi-Vue-TV, Inc.; *Partners in Progress;* Chamber of Commerce; Centennial City; *How the West Was Won; New York Times;* Forest Lawn; National Cowboy Hall of Fame

Photographs / Images: Parents of Spangler Arlington Brugh (Robert Taylor) 1904; Spangler Arlington Brugh (Robert Taylor), age nine, 1920; Spangler Arlington Brugh (Robert Taylor) with his pony about 1923; Anthony Shimerda cabin near the Big Blue River about 1923; Herbert E Gray; String quartet at Beatrice High School in 1925-26: B P Osborn, Don Abbott, Herbert Jackson, Spangler Arlington Brugh, and Gerhart Wiebe; Spangler Arlington Brugh (Robert Taylor) with his parents in Beatrice in 1929; The Harmony Boys (Spangler Arlington Brugh, Russell Gibson, Gerhart Wiebe) at Doane College, 1930 – 1931; Doane College drama players at Hastings in March of 1930; Kathryn Bender in 1938; Ursula Thiess Taylor and Robert Taylor, 1963, at Doane College in Crete

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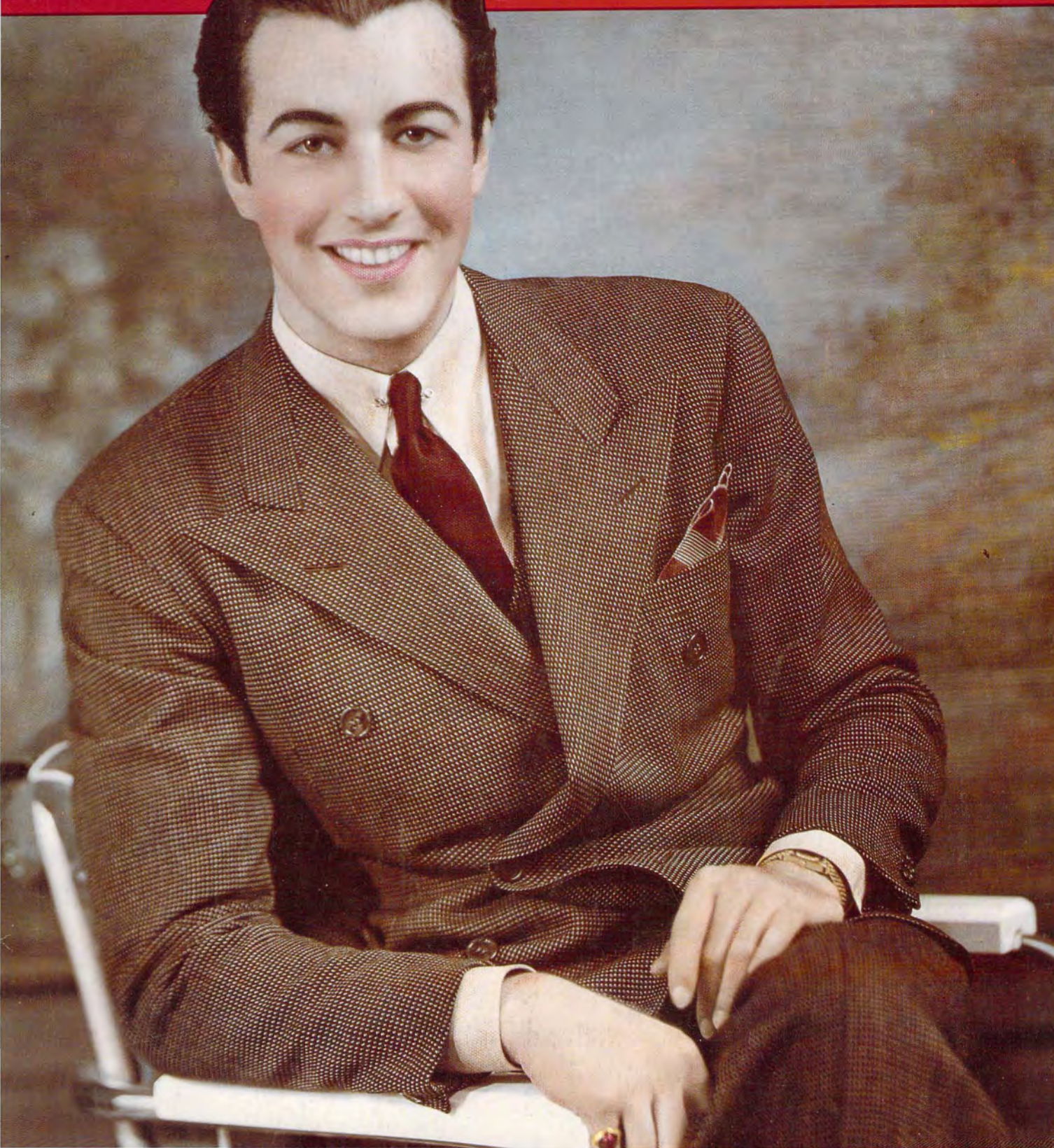

Robert Taylor of Beatrice

The Nebraska Roots of a Hollywood Star

By E. A. Kral

A number of Hollywood film personalities in the twentieth century were born in Nebraska. Among the notables are Fred Astaire, Montgomery Clift, Dorothy McGuire, and Nick Nolte, Omaha; James Coburn, Laurel; Ruth Etting, David City; "Hoot" Gibson, Tekamah; and David Janssen, Naponee. Film director Darryl F. Zanuck was born in Wahoo. The most honored to date are Oscar-winners Marlon Brando, Omaha; Sandy Dennis, Hastings; Henry Fonda, Grand Island; and Harold Lloyd, Burchard.[1]

The least-known of the great stars is the versatile Robert Taylor, the Filley native who not only appeared in eighty motion pictures and television films from 1934 to 1969, but also starred in one weekly television series and hosted another. The narrator of two Academy Award-winning feature length documentaries, *The Fighting Lady* in 1944 and *The Secret Land* in 1948, he also set two records as an actor. In 1934 Taylor was the lowest-paid contract player in Hollywood history at $35 per week, and he was under contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer for twenty-five years, the longest ever with one studio.[2]

Called by Hollywood biographer Jane Ellen Wayne "the man with the perfect face," Taylor was cast by MGM as a romantic hero in the 1930s.[3] The blue-eyed, black-haired Nebraskan stood almost five feet, eleven inches tall, weighed 175 pounds, and had a widow's peak that added to his box office appeal. He ranked fourth in 1936, third in 1937, and sixth in 1938.

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In a *New York Daily News* poll of twenty million people in 1937, he finished second behind famous screen lover Clark Gable as "King of Hollywood," and in 1938 became the first American actor to appear in a film made at MGM's lot in England.[4]

Parents of Spangler Arlington Brugh (Robert Taylor) about the time of their marriage on January 21, 1904. (NSHS-K90-614)

Taylor was the first Hollywood studio contract star to appear on television when he made a guest appearance in 1952 on CBS-TV's "The Ed Sullivan Show," and in the spring of 1954, he was named most popular star abroad by the Hollywood Foreign Press Correspondents Association, which was said to represent five hundred million filmgoers worldwide.

Taylor was also known for leading a relatively scandal-free private life. From 1939 to 1951 he was married to Barbara Stanwyck, herself a distinguished actress, and in 1954 he married German-born actress Ursula Schmidt Thiess, the mother of his son Terence and daughter Tessa. During his first marriage, he had affairs with at least two of his leading ladies—Lana Turner and Ava Gardner.[5]

A major constant in Taylor's life was his loyal love for his Nebraska roots. Stanwyck said, "He never broke away from Nebraska and still has a sense of belonging there."[6] Indeed, Taylor made at least nineteen return trips to his home state during his Hollywood years, and was most fond of Gage County, especially the city of Beatrice, which he considered his hometown. Taylor's sentiments about his home state were best expressed in a letter published in the annual *NEBRASKAland Afield* in 1967, when he wrote, "It happens that I like the people of Nebraska. They're the best, the most hospitable, the most honest, the most trustworthy people in our whole darned country."[7]

An in-depth account of his movie career and his private life during his famous years can be found in Jane Ellen Wayne's *Robert Taylor* (St. Martin's Press/Robson, 1973, 1987), to date the only book-length history of his life. But his family life and fine arts experiences during his formative years have received less attention. They help explain his subsequent career and his life-long attachment to Nebraska.

Robert Taylor was born Spangler Arlington Brugh on August 5, 1911, in Filley, a town of 194 about twelve miles east of Beatrice in southeast Nebraska. He was an only child of Spangler Andrew Brugh,

then manager of a Filley grain elevator (but formerly a farmer), and Ruth Adela Stanhope, daughter of the owner of the same elevator in Filley.[8]

The marriage of S. A. Brugh and Ruth Stanhope occurred in Filley on January 21, 1904. At the time, Brugh, a farmer in Rockford Township, was twenty-two years of age; Ruth, who had attended the Filley Public Schools, was sixteen. A year later Brugh became manager of the Stanhope-owned grain elevator in Filley. Ruth had been in poor health as a youth, and when doctors could not cure her, Brugh and his wife enrolled in the American School of Osteopathy in Kirksville, Missouri, in the fall of 1909. One year later they returned to Filley, where Brugh resumed work at the Stanhope elevator.[9]

Spangler Arlington Brugh (Robert Taylor) at age nine in 1920 at Anthony Shimerda cabin in Beatrice. (NSHS-K90-594)

Virtually nothing is known about these early years of young Arlington Brugh, though in 1913 the family did live for several months in Muskogee, Oklahoma, looking after farm property they owned there.[10] They returned to Kirksville in February 1914, where the father resumed his studies and graduated in January 1916 after completing the three-year program. Dr. Brugh moved his family to Fremont, Nebraska, with a 1910 population of 8,718, where he was an osteopath for one and one-half years. Arlington attended kindergarten in the fall of 1916 at East Elementary School; the family home was at 450 East Sixth Street.[11]

By September 1917 the family had moved to Beatrice, at the time the fifth largest city in Nebraska with a 1920 population of 9,664, where Dr. Brugh went into partnership with Dr. Preston Gass until 1920, when he became sole owner of the practice.[12] During their sixteen years in Beatrice, the Brughs lived at 922 North Ninth until 1921, 812 High Street until 1924, then at 901 North Sixth until 1933.

Spangler Arlington Brugh (Robert Taylor) with his pony "Gypsy" about 1923 at the Isaac Jamison farm southeast of Ellis. (NSHS-K90-646; courtesy of Norris Brugh)

Traditional values were important during Taylor's formative years, and his mother and father had a relationship based on mutual love and respect, which Taylor said, "conditioned my young idea of what marriage should be, of how a man should be with a woman." A Beatrice cousin, Earl Jamison, reported the parents were more quiet rather than talkative, observing "they spent their evenings at home, and there were no quarrels."[13]

Ruth Brugh's concern was for her family, and while fragile in appearance, she was strong and occasionally demanding. To many Beatrice people, however, her dominant characteristic was her infirmity, and the general belief was that "she enjoyed her illness." Ruth Brugh was observed seated in a wheelchair downtown, and her husband and son escorted her to the Paddock Hotel on Sunday noons for dinner. Neighbors believed that Dr. Brugh did most of the laundry and much of the cooking and that Arlington helped, too. Mrs. Brugh herself seemed to confirm this by reporting that Arlington "told me he didn't like to see me working, that neither Dad nor he liked me to work, that he liked to find me dressed up pretty and sitting down with a book in the parlor when he came home."[14]

Arlington learned responsibility and respect for authority at home, and the parents did not fear his being spoiled by their generosity. Though they provided him with a pony when he was eight years old, a pony cart, a harness and saddle, a bicycle, a dog, and guns of all kinds, "along with those playthings went a lot of responsibilities," wrote Taylor, who further stated, "Father and Mother were strict about that, and I don't ever remember being able to evade any punishments."[15] Drinking, smoking, and using profane language were discouraged by both the Brugh and Stanhope families. Arlington and his parents attended the Centenary Methodist Church in Beatrice, and he attended Sunday school there from about 1924 to 1928.[16]

The work ethic was fostered by chores at home, such as keeping wood organized and in boxes for use in the furnace and fireplace. He was also responsible for cleaning his room and doing his homework. He also wanted to work for money, and his parents encouraged him. He mowed neighbors' lawns with a

pushmower for twenty-five cents an hour, and as a ninth grader beat rugs over a clothes line during fall housecleaning. During this time he also worked on a farm, shocking wheat. When sixteen years old, he had a summer job painting cars, but the parents would not let him keep the job after school resumed. During his senior year at Beatrice High School, Arlington was given a 1929 Buick beige-and-orange-tinted, rumble-seated sports coupe, an unusual gift for the 1920s. Of that decision, the mother wrote, "But we told him he was such a good boy, and so trustworthy, that we knew we could trust him with this. It was *his* property and *his* responsibility." After graduation from high school, he had a summer job as an assistant bank teller and mowed lawns after banking hours.[17]

The S. A. Brughs were close to the Stanhopes, the mother's relatives, visiting on occasion the A. L. Stanhope home in Filley and the farm of sister Effie Jamison located south of Ellis. The gatherings in Filley frequently found Arlington and his cousins Earl, Charles, and Eva Jamison engaged in some sport or activity in the Stanhope yard or on the dirt street between the Stanhope house and the Methodist Church. Other youngsters reported "skinny dipping" with Arlington in Mud Creek just north of town.[18]

There was much hunting at the Jamison farm, especially on Thanksgiving. In 1936 Taylor returned to this farm during his homecoming to Beatrice, and accompanied by MGM publicists, shot a rabbit with his old .410 shotgun. He also had a chicken dinner at the farm, fondly recalling the meals he enjoyed there as a youth.[19]

The Brugh family also enjoyed a close association with Anthony and Rose Tyser Shimerda, who from 1907 to 1924 owned a 160-acre farm on the south edge of Beatrice adjacent to the Big Blue River and Chautauqua Park, and with the Robert Tyser family, subsequent owners after the Shimerdas moved to Wilber. The experiences these families shared left a lifelong impact on Taylor, for during his Hollywood years, he visited the Shimerdas and Tysers nearly every time he returned to the Beatrice area.[20]

In the summers the Brughs often stayed in a cabin on the farm, and while there, Arlington, his father, and Anthony Shimerda went pole fishing for catfish. In the winters they hunted rabbits, afterward eating them served with dumplings and rabbit gravy prepared by Rose Shimerda. At other times the Brughs enjoyed the Czech meals and conversation at the farm, and both families would walk to nearby Chautauqua Park each August to enjoy the many cultural activities.[21] It was at this farm that Arlington kept his pony named Gypsy for almost ten years, riding it in the pasture, and occasionally venturing as far away as the Jamison farm south of Ellis and the grandparents' home in Filley.

In the early years in Beatrice, Arlington was often in his father's office and accompanied him on some of his rounds, even assisting once during an emergency procedure.[22] Dr. Brugh was black-haired but balding, stout, well-dressed, and outgoing. By all accounts he was an excellent osteopath, considerate of everyone, and a wonderful neighbor. For a while, Taylor had considered becoming a doctor and liked the nickname "Doc" for many years.

In the fall of 1917 Arlington enrolled in the first grade at Fairview Elementary School. It's not clear when he transferred to Central Elementary, but it was almost certainly by the time he was in the sixth grade. Even then Arlington's handsome features were evident. He had blue eyes and dark brown (later off-black) hair that was heavy and wavy. He was also distinguished by a widow's peak. High Street neighbor Jeanne Barger St. John recalled that his mother dressed him in Lord Fauntleroy suits (short black velvet trousers and a white silk blouse), attire he wore through the sixth grade.[23]

But he suffered from peer pressure. Esther Heffelfinger Dockhorn, a 1927 Beatrice High graduate, remembered "people in grade school would refer to

Anthony Shimerda cabin near the Big Blue River along Beaver Avenue in Beatrice about 1923. (NSHS-K90-595; courtesy of Tyser family)

Arlington as 'little Lord Fauntleroy' in jest because of his immaculate dress." Though Taylor reported he was sometimes nicknamed "Buddy," friends and relatives often used "Arly," a shortened version of his middle name "Arlington." In 1937 he expressed his dislike for this name, but he forgave his mother "for that and for those Lord Fauntleroy suits I once had to wear."[24]

Arlington was a normal schoolboy for his time. He played baseball and football on the school playground; roller skated; and played jacks, marbles, hop scotch, and other games. Taylor also recalled, "I was usually the room monitor and the president of the class or whatever that office is called in the grades."[25] But Mrs. Brugh was overprotective of him, for he accompanied her when going downtown or to church, and when in the sixth and seventh grades, she required him to sit on the porch at home but didn't permit him to play with the neighbors' children after school and on weekends. For this the neighborhood kids ridiculed him.[26] Taylor's recollections of his childhood bear out his shy and serious traits. He recalled liking to be alone and he enjoyed reading, particularly Horatio Alger stories and adventure books. He also had a pony, his bicycle, and various pets.

The community of Beatrice also offered Arlington the chance to expand his joy for the outdoors. Not only was he a member of the Boy Scouts of America, but also "with the other kids in Beatrice, I played sandlot baseball—as a scrub; went swimming at Riverside Park; played tennis, and had a lot of fun outdoors," he wrote in 1937. His mother also wrote that he swam at the YMCA, took long bicycle rides, and went horseback riding. She also reported that he "was naturally a high-strung child" who would become upset if spoken to harshly or if he had done something wrong. His tendencies for perfectionism and for worrying had formed early.

He coped with the pressures of being different by relying on counsel from his parents and by seeking privacy. In 1937 Taylor commented, "I was not, I still am not, gregarious. I was then as I am now, uneasy when I am with more than one person. I preferred being alone on the prairie or in the woods, to playing football with the gang."[27]

Arlington's versatility in the performing arts began to develop in a variety of activities, both informal and formal, during his Beatrice years, even though he did not make a conscious decision toward an acting career until the spring of 1933, when

Herbert E. Gray. (NSHS-K90-638)

he was a senior at Pomona College in Claremont, California. Arlington's music activity, which became an important step in his eventual career, originated with the Stanhopes. He was fond of holidays spent with the grandparents. The clan often gathered, there was a large dinner, and "we sang carols and played games," he recalled. Arlington himself sang in the choir at the Centenary Methodist Church, where he and his parents were members.[28]

Arlington began piano lessons when he was about ten years of age. Meanwhile, Beatrice Public Schools music supervisor B. P. Osborn, who taught instrumental music at all schools from 1923 to 1926, had begun to teach appreciation of classical music, and encouraged students to compete in statewide music events. It was Osborn who "went to some trouble to convince Arlington that the cello was the instrument for a gentleman."[29]

Arlington then took cello lessons in Lincoln once a week from February 1925 to 1929 with Herbert E. Gray, an instructor at the University School of Music, a private institution until it was purchased in 1930 by the University of Nebraska. According to another former student of his, Emanuel Wishnow, a violinist and music professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln from 1933 to 1975, Gray "was a large, talkative man who was a persuasive, dominant personality." Ruth Brugh recalled that Gray saw Arlington's potential as a cello player, and she felt the lessons with Professor Gray, more than any other factor, led Taylor to Hollywood and fame.[30]

Music supervisor Osborn continued to give instruction to his most gifted musicians, including Arlington on the cello. During the ninth grade, Arlington was a member of the Beatrice Junior High Orchestra, and was one of four soloists to perform before an audience at Wymore.[31] During the tenth grade, he was a member of a string quartet that gave a public performance in April 1927; Arlington also performed a cello solo titled "The Swan."

Soon after he was one of five, including the string quartet, to represent the Beatrice Public Schools in the State Music Contest in Lincoln. During the eleventh grade, he was a member of a string quartet that placed second in the State Music Contest in May 1928. And in the twelfth grade, he continued as a member of the string quartet and of the orchestra that provided music for plays, banquets, and other special programs.

He also participated in the thirty-five-member community orchestra of volun-

teer youths directed by Frank E. Lenhart from about 1924 to 1929. It played wherever Lenhart could obtain engagements, including church socials, town fairs, and even the Nebraska State Penitentiary. It played on radio station KFAB (then in Lincoln) twice and on WOW in Omaha once. At least one performance was given at the Rivoli Theater in Beatrice. During high school, Arlington was associated with the Rivoli Theater, listing himself in the 1929 *Beatrice City Directory* as a musician there.[32]

String quartet at Beatrice High School in 1925-26: music instructor B. P. Osborn (back left), and Don Abbott; Herbert Jackson (front left), Spangler Arlington Brugh (Robert Taylor), and Gerhart Wiebe. (NSHS-K90-645)

Taylor's interest in drama developed as a result of exposure to local movies and association with "home talent" performers. After World War I, the Brughs and other Beatrice residents had access to silent films at the Rialto and Gilbert, and viewed films of the silent screen comedian Harold Lloyd, the Burchard native who had lived in Beatrice for a short time just after 1900. In October 1926 the Rivoli opened, and of it Taylor said in 1936, "I sat in the first row the first night . . . and believe it or not, I once sang on this stage." He also reported he had been usher as well as master of ceremonies of a style show there.[33]

While he was in elementary school, the eight-year-old Arlington made his first public appearance in a piece he wrote entitled *The Sick Monkey*. At the age of ten, he wrote *China*, and presented it before church and school groups. During the twelfth grade Arlington expanded his dramatic experiences in school and in the community. In October 1928 he played the role of a freshman in *Aunt Lucia*, a play staged by the adults in Beatrice.[34] That year he also attended dramatics class and was a member of the Dramatics Club. In December 1928 Arlington had one of the major roles as a hardheaded stockbroker who was not too scrupulous in the three-act comedy *Nothing But the Truth*, and in the spring of 1929 he had the male lead in the senior high operetta titled *Captain Crossbones*, labeled in the 1929 *Homesteader*, the school annual, as "a great success."

By the end of high school, however, his performance in dramatics apparently did not attract widespread attention locally, for his mother in 1936 wrote, "No teacher in high school ever particularly encouraged him about his acting. We never thought much about his dramatic ability; neither did he. To us, it was only one of several talents he showed us."[35] Others, however, including C. B. Dempster, a High Street neighbor and owner of the Dempster Mill Manufacturing Company, had suggested educating Arlington in dramatics, and predicted a brilliant future for him in the movies. And Taylor himself wrote in 1937, "Perhaps such kind encouragement did give me ambition to act in high school plays."[36]

There were other activities that prepared Taylor for an acting career. Although "Arlington was considered effeminate until high school because the boys were jealous of his good looks and he didn't participate in sports," stated Paul Drew, a 1928 Beatrice High graduate, his popularity had grown sufficiently by the ninth grade for him to be the first elected student body president of Beatrice Junior High. Its large auditorium with a seating capacity of 1,256 was used for various school and community activities, and Arlington's leadership position gave him valuable experience in facing an audience. In 1966 Taylor wrote to Beatrice publisher Robert Marvin, "I shall never forget the fears that overcame me every time I had to preside over a 'meeting' in that auditorium to introduce guest speakers. Nothing since has ever frightened me as much."[37]

As a junior, he was elected president of the Junior Class, and was in charge of toasts at the annual Beatrice High Junior-Senior Banquet held in May 1928 at the Paddock Hotel. Arlington was in debate that year, and did well locally but was not on the varsity debate team. He also participated that year in an informal activity known as the Junior-Senior Olympics, an organized ritual among the boys on the football field after school in the late spring.[38]

By this time, he had endured some resentment because of his success, his looks, and his popularity. The term "pretty

boy" was occasionally used, though perhaps not directly to him, and publisher Marvin stated that "one of Arlington's nicknames in jest and sometimes in print was 'Home Brugh,' or more literally 'home brew.'"[39]

In a 1936 interview Taylor stated that he liked to dance. His mother wrote that he learned how to dance at the age of sixteen at the Casino in Lake Okoboji, Iowa, where she and her husband spent three consecutive summers vacationing in a cottage, with Arlington joining them at summer's end. While many of the boys at the time considered dancing for sissies, it's clear that he used it to gain popularity with women. A favorite place of his was the outdoor dance hall at Riverside Park in Beatrice. An editorial judgment was published under his photo at the back of the 1928 *Homesteader*. The caption read, "One At a Time, Girls."[40]

As a senior, he was a member of the Boys Glee Club, Student Council, the *Homesteader* staff, and Crabtree Forensic Club as well as the Dramatics Club, National Honor Society, and Orchestra. He was also senior social chairman. At the twelfth annual state drama contest held at Nebraska Wesleyan in Lincoln, he was the state champion in the oratorical category.[41]

His academic work throughout the three years at Beatrice Senior High was excellent. Out of a total of twenty-eight graded courses in a college preparatory program, he earned twelve Bs and sixteen As.[42] On May 29 at the fiftieth commencement of Beatrice Senior High School, Arlington was introduced as one of the three gold medal finalists, and he was among the ten members of the Beatrice High Chapter of the National Honor Society.

Even though Taylor in 1937 said, "No one except my mother, father, and grandparents really 'influenced' my life or left any mark upon me," it is clear that he in later years remembered the contributions of others during his formative years. To cousin Nelda Brugh, he wrote in 1948 that

> when you mention Dempsters, Store Kraft, etc., you bring back some very pleasant memories of my youth in Beatrice. I believe if you were to put me on the corner of Sixth and Court Streets, I could find any of them blindfolded. You see, Nelda, I still think of Beatrice as "home" and many of the people there as the best friends I have ever had or *will* ever have.[43]

After graduation from Beatrice High School, Taylor did not know what career he might pursue, but he decided to attend Doane College in Crete, a coeducational four-year liberal arts institution affiliated with the Congregational Church. Arlington may have been predisposed to select Doane. "Many young Beatrice people who could afford it in the 1920s and 1930s went to Doane because it was a smaller school, and parents thought a bigger school was 'wilder,'" commented Esther Legate Aller, a 1928 Beatrice High graduate who dated Arlington during the winter of his senior year in Beatrice.

His mother wrote that he attended Doane because Professor Herbert E. Gray, his cello tutor since 1925, would be a part-time faculty member there in addition to his duties in Lincoln at the University School of Music. And Taylor recalled in 1937 that he wanted to attend Doane to remain with his best friend, Gerhart Wiebe.[44]

Located on the bluffs, or hill, overlooking Crete in the scenic Big Blue River Valley, Doane was a small college that offered close student/faculty relationships. During the two years that Taylor attended, there were ten buildings on campus with an enrollment of almost three hundred students with twenty-four full time teaching faculty members. Students during the 1929-30 school year could choose among seventeen majors. Arlington was registered with the Department of Music, and overall he earned average grades in academics.[45]

Spangler Arlington Brugh (Robert Taylor) with his parents in Beatrice in 1929.
(NSHS-K90-604; courtesy of Eva Jamison Warkentin Unruh)

He participated in many activities during his freshman year, serving as class president, a member of Iota Delta Chi, one of the local fraternities; and participation in both the Doane Symphony and the Doane Players. He also went out for track during the spring semester.[46]

A memorable accomplishment that year was winning an oratorical contest held in Crete in December 1929 under the auspices of the Anti-Saloon League of Ne-

braska. The topic was "Ten Years of Prohibition," but the urging of his drama coach, Mary Ellen Inglis, went unheeded until his mother promised him a coonskin coat if he won. As the contest winner, he gained not only the coat but also a trip to Detroit, Michigan, January 14-21, 1930, to attend the national convention of the Anti-Saloon League of America.[47]

His music experiences his freshman year involved playing the cello with the Doane Symphony Orchestra, comprised of thirty-five members and directed by Professor C. Burdette Wolfe. But his most significant activity as a freshman was participation in a music trio comprised of Arlington, cellist; his Beatrice pal Gerhart Wiebe, violinist; and Friend native Russ Gibson, a pianist who also played the trumpet and French horn. The trio had formed in the fall of 1929. During a week's road trip in March 1930 with the Doane Players, a dramatic group, to promote the college at several Nebraska communities, the trio went ahead of the troupe to perform in the high schools of the town where they would perform in the evening. When at the town of Harvard, Russ Gibson suggested the trio go to nearby Clay Center to perform on radio station KMMJ to advertise the drama production. The trio did broadcast on KMMJ March 28-29, and also auditioned at the home of station owner H. H. Johnson, who "hired us then and there for the sum of $100 a week for the three of us." That summer, the trio became known as "The Harmony Boys," a name that may have been borrowed from a Lincoln group called "The Harmony Girls."[48]

Thus in the summer of 1930—and the following summer of 1931, Taylor gained his first professional experience in the entertainment industry at KMMJ, which had begun broadcasting on November 30, 1925, in Clay Center, a town of 933 residents in 1930, and located sixty-five miles west of Crete. Owned by the Johnson family, which had owned a company that manufactured Old Trusty incubators and brooders used to hatch and raise chickens, KMMJ operated with 1,000 watts of power and had a listening area that extended some one hundred miles in all directions.

The Harmony Boys (Spangler Arlington Brugh, Russell Gibson, and Gerhart Wiebe), a trio at Doane College, performed on radio station KMMJ in Clay Center during the summers of 1930 and 1931. (NSHS-K90-567; courtesy of Doane College)

According to George C. Kister, one of the early announcers, the station had twelve announcers, a staff of thirty-five to fifty entertainers, and all programming was live from 8:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. daily. The entertainment staff, wrote Kister, included "hillbilly singers, old-time fiddlers, orchestras, bands, gospel singers. They were all part of the daily programming and many units were identified with a certain product they sold." The Harmony Boys, who were given every other Sunday off, had three or four times a day their fifteen-minute program. They were used to sell Old Trusty Fly Spray, and the trio, when not on the air, would remain at the studio, "rehearsing for anything from the polka band to the symphony, particularly if you could blow a horn, tell jokes, sing, or whatever," wrote Gibson. Gibson, Wiebe, and Brugh went their separate ways after the summer of 1931, but they were reunited as a surprise for Taylor on national television in April 1967 on CBS-TV's "Mike Douglas Show," which Taylor briefly cohosted.[49]

During his sophomore year, Arlington was cellist in the Doane String Quartet, and continued his participation in the Doane Symphony Orchestra and the Doane Players. The quartet performed publicly on campus, on broadcasts over KFAB and KMMJ, at Marshalltown and Grinnell College in eastern Iowa, and at Beatrice, Crete, Wilber, Ashland, and Omaha. Throughout his two years at Doane in the field of music, Arlington worked closely with Doane's part-time cello instructor Herbert E. Gray, and they occasionally performed together in the Lincoln Symphony from 1929 to 1931.[50]

Gray felt some frustration when Arling-

ton devoted time to dramatics at Doane. Mrs. Brugh explained in 1936: "We did not want him [Arlington] to gamble his whole future on just the cello; we wanted music to be something that would give him personal pleasure, relaxation." Taylor's version, expressed in 1937, revealed his instincts were leading him toward his career:

> In my freshman year, I played the leading role in the campus performance *Helena's Boys*, greatly to the disgust of Professor Gray, who wanted to know why I "fiddled about with such nonsense." He said that I should concentrate on the cello, that I had the makings of a concert artist, what had I to do with "playacting"? I couldn't tell him. I didn't know myself. I don't know now. I only knew that there was something in the musty smell of backstage that I liked.[51]

During his freshman year in dramatics, Arlington gained valuable experience as a member of the Doane Players, which rehearsed at Lee Memorial Chapel but usually performed at Sokol Theater (now Sokol Hall), located at the northeast corner of Twelfth and Norman Streets in the business district of Crete. His first performance was for the Doane Players on October 30 as the lead in the *One Act Tragedy*, a drama in which he played the role of the father of a family that was apartment hunting. On this occasion, he also sang with Russ Gibson, Gerhart Wiebe, and Roland Schaffert in a group called the "Serenaders."[52]

Taylor's first public performance as an actor at Doane was on December 19, 1929, in Ida L. Ehrlich's *Helena's Boys*. This play was also selected for the Players' seventh annual trip March 22-30, 1930, and Arlington was one of the ten students who participated. *Helena's Boys* was presented at the communities of Alma, Bertrand, Clay Center, Franklin, Harvard, Hastings, Holdrege, Loomis, Minden, Oxford, and Sutton. At the close of his freshman year, he had the lead role in *The House Divided*, a three-act comedy-drama written by Kenneth Keller, a member of the Players. It was presented as the commencement play on May 31, and Arlington portrayed district attorney James Bartley.[53]

In his sophomore year, Arlington was cast in Philip Barry's *Holiday*, performed on November 19, 1930. This required him to play the role of a boy who began drinking to suppress his real feelings. On January 31, 1931, he had the male lead in the comedy-drama *Alias, the Kid*, written by William Harkins, a member of the Players, and performed at St. James Hall in Crete. As Dennis Brookman, he was a bank robber who went "straight" after falling in love with the girl who roomed next door. And during the spring trip of the Players in western Nebraska and eastern Colorado, he worked as an advance publicity man at each town visited. During his two years at Doane, Arlington became a member of the dramatic fraternity Delta Omicron cast, which qualified him for membership in Alpha Psi Omega, a national dramatic fraternity.

Arlington's drama coach, Mary Ellen Inglis, had created the elect group known as the Doane Players, and she developed the Speech Department from 1922 to 1935, the years she served at Doane. Taylor clearly held her in high esteem, writing her by 1936 of his appreciation for the part she had in starting him on the right road during the important formative period of his life. Her impact on her students was generally long-lasting, and 1929 Doane graduate Evelyn Overman Morrison observed, "Inglis was very popular among the students. She liked Arlington Brugh and helped his confidence."[54]

Despite advantages other Doane students did not have, Taylor maintained a conservative lifestyle, was well liked on campus, and continued in close contact with his parents. Like other young men at Doane, which in 1929 did not have campus housing for men, he lived off campus, staying at the home of Estel and Eva Spadt at 622 East Thirteenth Street. As a sophomore, he roomed in Men's Hall (now Smith Hall) newly opened in 1930, but both years he and other boys were required to eat at the college cafeteria in Gaylord Hall.[55]

"Doc," as Arlington was known on campus, dated several girls while at Doane, but the longest relationship was with Kathryn Bender Boekel of Crete. In an interview sixty years later, Boekel remembered, "He was a perfect gentleman, very attentive, very handsome, a 'ladies' man, prompt, reliable, very honest, very intelligent, not a storyteller, did not gossip, was well groomed, meticulous, and had a bass voice." It is noteworthy that their friendship was remembered in the community. After Taylor's death, the June 12, 1969, *Crete News* used the subheading

Doane College drama players at Hastings in March 1930: Russ Gibson (left), Roland Schaffert, Cecelia Yost, Spangler Arlington Brugh (Robert Taylor), Kathryn Bender, drama teacher Mary Ellen Inglis, Margaret Finney, Beth Naden, and Gerhart Wiebe. (NSHS-K90-589; courtesy of Beth Naden Kellar)

"romance" to represent what several citizens recalled about Taylor and Bender.[56]

Taylor's two years at Doane enabled him to sort through his career options. He eliminated law and ministry as career choices. During the middle of his sophomore year he wrote to his parents, explaining that he wanted to leave Doane and enroll in medical school, perhaps Johns Hopkins University, then later enter the American School of Osteopathy in Kirksville to follow his father. His mother advised him to finish college before deciding, and Taylor soon gave up the idea of a medical career because he wasn't good at chemistry. Nor did he have a strong desire to become a professional cellist. Even though he was particularly fond of dramatics, Taylor still thought of them as a hobby.[57] Family ties and college friendships were a strong attraction for Taylor to remain at Doane.[58]

Nevertheless, when his cello professor Herbert E. Gray announced in May 1931 that he was taking a leave of absence after the summer session at the University of Nebraska to fill a vacancy at Pomona College in Claremont, California, Arlington understood that Gray hoped he would transfer to Pomona College, for Gray had spoken to his parents about Pomona's high scholastic ranking and the advantages a larger school could offer. Sometime in the summer, Doane College offered Gray's music position to Arlington, even though he was still a student. Taylor later wrote, "I drove home to talk it over with my parents and we arrived at a decision that changed the course of my life . . . his [Gray's] enthusiasm for the California college and for my prospects of becoming a really good cellist led my parents to suggest that I should transfer to Pomona also. I agreed."[59] At the time, neither the parents nor Arlington thought of the proximity of Hollywood to Pomona College.

While at Pomona College for his junior and senior years, Arlington prepared for a career in business and continued his association with Professor Gray. He also formed a friendship with Professor Robert Ross of the Department of Psychology, and it was in the summer of 1932 after his junior year that he enrolled in Ross's six-week lecture course on psychiatry. Inaccurate reports later appeared in the media that he had intended to become a psychiatrist. That same summer Arlington returned to Beatrice after completion of Ross's course, and Doane College offered him various inducements to return to Crete for his senior year. His parents, however, hoped Arlington would stay at Pomona.[60]

Kathryn Bender at age twenty-seven in 1938. (NSHS-K90-588; courtesy of Kathryn Bender Boekel)

During his senior year, Arlington not only participated in college plays but was discovered by MGM talent scout Ben Piazza in December 1932 for his role in the campus production of R. C. Sheriff's World War I drama *Journey's End*. After he was offered in early 1933 a screen test at MGM Studios at Culver City, he wrote his parents for advice, and according to his autobiographical series in 1937, Dr. Brugh replied, "Be careful. Take your time. Finish your education before you decide." After the initial screen test, Arlington was disappointed, but a few days later MGM invited him to take instruction from its dramatic coach Oliver Hinsdell. He did so two times a week for about a month, then decided to complete his coursework; on June 19, 1933, he was among 194 awarded a bachelor's degree from Pomona College.[61]

Arlington then moved to Hollywood to attend a dramatics course at the Neely Dixon Dramatic School, which had an option on his services. And he had informed his parents "that he would try acting for a year—and then, if it did not pan out, he would make use of his business degree." But his lessons were interrupted on August 15, when his father underwent major surgery in Beatrice for an inflamed or ruptured gall bladder, causing Arlington to return home for a month.[62]

After his father died on October 15, 1933, Arlington returned home again for the funeral held at the Centenary Methodist Church. His father's death was a deep loss. For a while it appeared Arlington might remain in Beatrice. His mother wanted to stay in Nebraska while Arlington returned to Hollywood, but he refused to leave her. He also helped her with settling the estate. After Mrs. Brugh decided Arlington should not pass up the opportunity to use his abilities, they moved to Hollywood in late November 1933, where Arlington re-enrolled in the MGM dramatic school under the coaching of Hinsdell.[63]

On February 6, 1934, he signed a contract with MGM. A short time later MGM executive Louis G. Mayer changed the young actor's name from Spangler Arlington Brugh to Robert Taylor, and he was loaned to Twentieth Century Fox for a small role in *Handy Andy* starring Will Rogers. Based on Lewis Beach's *Merry Andrew*, it premiered on August 3, 1934, at the Roxy Theater in New York City.

Robert Taylor never really left Nebraska in a spiritual sense. As he matured, he showed his love and appreciation for his roots with at least nineteen return visits, a few of which coincided with his mother's visits, but most of which involved public appearances, hunting excursions, business ventures, and sentiment. He also extended a variety of kindnesses and in many ways served as

an unofficial ambassador for Nebraska. A pilot and an avid outdoorsman, Taylor hunted, fished, and rode horseback, and during his later years lived on a 113-acre ranch in Brentwood, a suburb of Los Angeles.[64] Taylor's first return was in October 1936. It was his "homecoming" celebration in Beatrice, where on October 28 an estimated 20,000 viewed a parade for Taylor that was "one of the biggest in the history of the city." It merited a banner headline in that afternoon's *Beatrice Daily Sun*, and coverage in Nebraska's largest newspapers in Lincoln and Omaha. At an assembly at the Junior High Auditorium "the students gave Taylor a full minute ovation which threatened to shatter the windows."[65]

The four-day visit included receptions at the Rivoli Theater and Paddock Hotel in Beatrice and at the Hotel Cornhusker in Lincoln, a dinner party at Doane College, rabbit hunting and a chicken dinner at the Jamison farm near Ellis, supper at the Shimerda home in Wilber, attendance at the Nebraska-Missouri football game in Lincoln, and a not-so-secret date with a girlfriend from his Clay Center days at KMMJ.[66]

After World War II he returned to Nebraska three times in 1946 as copilot of his twin-engine Beechcraft. He visited friends in the Beatrice and Wilber areas, and hunted at Ord and Lisco. With actor Wallace Beery, he stayed at Omaha brewer Arthur Storz's famous Ducklore Lodge, and participated in the Armistice Day celebration which attracted to Lisco some 6,000 persons.[67]

In January 1953 as part of a promotional tour for his newly completed film *Above and Beyond*, he attended a luncheon at the Blackstone Hotel in Omaha, where he was presented a citation of appreciation by the Strategic Air Command. Later that May he brought his wife-to-be, Ursula Thiess, to Beatrice for dinner at the home of friend Arvid Eyth, and visits to Filley and Wilber.[68]

Taylor helped Doane College begin a developmental campaign to raise five million dollars in October 1963 and received the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane

Ursula Thiess Taylor and Robert Taylor on October 25, 1963, at Doane College in Crete. (NSHS-K90-639; courtesy of Doane College)

Letters. The trip included attendance at the Nebraska-Colorado football game, and a gift of NEBRASKAland stamps from the Information and Tourism Division of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in recognition of his contributions to the pioneer and cowboy heritage of the state. In September 1964 Taylor was honored by the Nebraska Broadcasters Association at their annual meeting in Grand Island, and began discussions with William Martin that led to a partnership in Multi-Vue-TV, Inc.[69]

There were two stops in Grand Island in 1966, one to narrate a "Partners in Progress" presentation before a Chamber of Commerce crowd of 1,700, and another to join the Chamber of Commerce, his only such enrollment anywhere. His February 1967 visit to North Platte involved helping the city celebrate its Centennial City designation, and narration of a twenty-six-minute musical presentation titled "How The West Was Won." The following year he made his final public appearance in Nebraska at a mid-January celebration of the opening of the new Multi-Vue-TV company in Grand Island.[70]

There were other return trips in 1949, 1952, 1958, 1963, and 1965. The last visit to Nebraska soil appropriately occurred in Gage County in 1968 when Taylor drove a rented car from the Omaha airport to Beatrice, Filley, and Holmesville on April 1, then the next day, after "some coffee with Bob and Flossie Tyser at the old farm south of town," he returned to Omaha for a flight to Chicago.[71]

Just before Taylor had surgery on his right lung on October 8, 1968, he dictated an audio recording that was played for George Kister's luncheon in Grand Island that October in honor of his retirement from KMMJ after forty-three continuous years in the industry. Taylor's closing comments were in part, "I remember those days [at Clay Center] as the greatest days of my life."[72]

Robert Taylor died on June 8, 1969, at the age of fifty-seven from lung cancer in Santa Monica, California. His obituary was reported the next day on the front page of the *New York Times*, a rare honor for actors. Long-time friend and then California governor Ronald Reagan delivered the eulogy at funeral services held at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale. Some four hundred mourners, including Barbara Stanwyck, were in attendance. Taylor's body was cremated, and the urn entombed in a crypt in the "Court of Freedom" section of Forest Lawn.[73]

In 1970 Taylor was posthumously inducted into the Hall of Great Western Performers by the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, for his "Westerner's quiet dignity and strength that was reflected in everything he did . . . on the screen and in real life."[74]

So what may one conclude about Robert Taylor's formative years in Nebraska? Certainly his parents were major factors in his development as a versatile performing artist. But there were many opportunities for him to gain experience in the Beatrice area, and the offerings and tutoring by his drama instructor and cello teacher at Doane College added to his development. He also absorbed the work ethic and moral values fostered in Gage County and Nebraska in general.

He longed to return to Nebraska, and after his marriage to the glamorous Ursula Thiess, he expressed interest in a 160-acre farm at the northeast corner of Nineteenth and Dorsey in Beatrice in the 1950s, but he did not pursue the matter. Yet, though he did not physically reside in the state after 1931, he considered himself a Nebraskan and wrote in 1963, "It may seem strange to a lot of people but what the 'people back home' think has always been a very important thing to me—and many a time a decision on my part has been influenced largely by what I figgered [sic] my old friends and associates back in Nebraska would think of it."[75]

His immortality is assured by the preservation and occasional replay of his eighty films and by the honors accorded him during and after his lifetime. That this handsome heart-throb of the Hollywood golden-era came from a small-town Nebraska family is a source of pride for many, particularly since he loved his roots and remained a loyal ambassador for the state.[76]

Notes

[1] This article is a condensation of E. A. Kral's "Robert Taylor: A Golden-Era Hollywood Movie King From Nebraska," published in a forty-eight-page, tabloid-sized supplement to the *Beatrice Daily Sun*, Oct. 8, 1993. For birth places of movie personalities mentioned, consult Ephraim Katz, *The Film Encyclopedia*, 1st ed. (New York: Crowell, 1979).

[2] Louis Pollock, "Robert Taylor, the Man Behind the 'Slick Pan,'" *Coronet*, Apr. 1961, 84-90; Kitty Callahan, "Robert Taylor," *The Family Circle*, July 23, 1943, 10-11, 22-23. Taylor was featured on the cover of the *Omaha World-Herald Magazine*, July 15, 1951.

For a virtually complete listing of Taylor's movie credits, see Jane Ellen Wayne, *Robert Taylor* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 280-349. See also Nicholas Thomas, ed., *International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers: Actors and Actresses*, 2nd ed., (Chicago: St. James Press, 1992), 3:963-64; James R. Parish and Vincent Terrace, *The Complete Actors' Television Credits, 1948-1988*, (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1989), 1:470; Mike Kaplan, ed., *Variety's Directory of Major U.S. Show Business Awards* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1989), 24, 31.

[3] *Time*, Jan. 18, 1937, 25-26, called Taylor "cinema's most passionately admired matinee idol since the late Rudolph Valentino." See also Jane Mercer, *Great Lovers of the Movies* (New York: Crescent Books, 1975), 110-15. On the cover of this book, Taylor is shown with Clark Gable, John Gilbert, and Robert Redford. See also Jim Tully, "Hollywood's King of Romance," *This Week*, Oct. 25, 1936, 7, 26; "Mr. Brugh . . . pronounced Robert Taylor," *Life*, Nov. 23, 1936, 60-63.

[4] Jane Ellen Wayne, *Clark Gable: Portrait of a Misfit* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 156; Robert Taylor, "Anything Can Happen in Hollywood," *Ladies Home Journal*, Sept. 1936, 8-9, 92-95, in which the editor reported that Taylor finished first in a national poll among girls sixteen to twenty. In John Douglas Eames, *The MGM Story* (New York: Crown, 1975), 126, the *London Observer* was quoted as reporting: "[The year] 1936 will go on record as the year of Edward VIII, the Spanish War, and Robert Taylor."

[5] Ursula Thiess appeared on the cover of *Life*, June 4, 1951, as a "rising German model" with an inside article on pages 71-74. She and Taylor were on the cover of *Parade*, Sept. 25, 1960. Her memoirs are contained in a 450-page unpublished manuscript titled *But I Have Promises to Keep* (in possession of Ursula Thiess Taylor Schacker and Terence Taylor, Los Angeles). Wayne, *Robert Taylor*, 108, 137. See also Ava Gardner, *Ava: My Story* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 117-19; Jane Ellen Wayne, *The Life and Loves of Lana Turner* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) in press.

[6] Jane Ellen Wayne, *Stanwyck: The Untold Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 107. Axel Madsen, *Stanwyck* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994).

[7] *NEBRASKAland Afield*, Fall 1967, 4. This annual tabloid devoted to hunting in Nebraska was published by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for about five years in the mid-1960s.

[8] Information on Taylor's ancestry: Phoeba Brugh Stuart, *The Brugh-Stuart Family & Associated Families* (Erie, PA: privately published, 1977), 18-25; Archives, Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, Kirksville, Mo.; obituary of Jacob A. Brugh, *Beatrice Daily Sun*, Mar. 1, 1937, p. 1; Hugh J. Dobbs, *History of Gage County, Nebraska* (Lincoln: Western Publishing and Engraving, 1918), 620-21; letter and pedigree chart from Libby Redwine, Nov. 13, 1992; Centennial Committee, *Once Their Hopes Were High, Filley, Nebraska, 1883-1983* (Beatrice, Nebr.: Miller Printery, 1983), 34. The Brugh family was of German descent, the Stanhope family of English and Scotch descent.

[9] Wayne, *Robert Taylor*, 16-17. See also Ruth Brugh with James Reid, "Fate, Fame, and Robert Taylor," *Movie Classic*, Sept. 1936, 28-29. The Brugh with Reid article is continued in October and November issues.

[10] Brugh and Reid, Sept. 1936, 28, 29; *The Semi-Weekly Express* (Beatrice), Feb. 15, 1912, p. 8.

[11] *Fremont City Directory*, 1916.

[12] *Beatrice Daily Sun*, Nov. 1, 1917, p. 5; Brugh and Reid, Sept. 1936, 82.

[13] Gladys Hall, *Robert Taylor's True Life Story* (New York: Dell, 1937), 13; Earl Jamison, interview with author, Mar. 2, 1992; Ruth Crone, "Being Mother of a Movie Star," *Omaha World-Herald Magazine*, June 2, 1957, p. G-5.

[14] Paul Drew, interview with author, June 2, 1992; Hall, *Life Story*, 12.

[15] Robert Taylor, "Robert Taylor's Own Life Story," *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), Mar. 1, 1937, p.9. This autobiographical series was continued on Mar. 2, p. 6; Mar. 3, p. 6; Mar. 4, p. 10; Mar. 5, p. 8; Mar. 6, p. 6; Mar. 8, p. 6; and Mar. 9, p. 6. Published nationwide by permission of North American Newspaper Alliance, Taylor's articles netted him three thousand dollars, according to Hollywood columnist Sheilah Graham. "Taylor's Life Story Costly," *Omaha World-Herald*, Feb. 28, 1937, p. C-2.

[16] Cyrus Hummer, telephone interview with author, Oct. 20, 1992.

[17] Robert Drew and Delores Harmon Drew, interview with author, July 9, 1992; Iris West Aller, telephone interview with author, July 13, 1992; Brugh and Reid, Oct. 1936, 64.

[18] *Once Upon a Time*, 58. Jamison interview.

[19] *Beatrice Daily Sun*, Oct. 30, 1936, p. 1; Nov. 1, 1936, p. 1.

[20] Records at the Gage County Courthouse reveal the Shimerda farm was located in Riverside Precinct in Sections 2-3-6 and 3-3-6. Today the property is owned by Glennys Tyser Ziegler and Arlington Tyser. The Shimerda/Tyser house is at 1320 Beaver Avenue, and nearby stands the barn in which young Arly Brugh kept his pony, Gypsy.

[21] Stella Tyser Vlcek, interview with author, June 10, 1992.

[22] Hall, *Life Story*, 14.

[23] Letter to Nelda Brugh, Mar. 24, 1948; Jeanne Barger St. John, interview with author, July 31, 1992.

[24] Esther Heffelfinger Dockhorn, telephone interview with author, Mar. 28, 1993; "Robert Taylor Answers," *Movie Classic*, Sept. 1936, 23; Jamison interview;Taylor, *Nebraska State Journal*, Mar.1, 1937, p. 9.

[25] Hall, *Life Story*, 10.

[26] St. John interview.

[27] Hall, *Life Story*, 11; also Brugh and Reid, Nov. 1936, 48.

[28] Hall, *Life Story*, 11.

[29] Kyle Crichton, "Heart Bumper," *Collier's*, Oct. 3, 1936, 55. In Brugh and Reid, Sept. 1936, 82, the mother wrote, "When he was about twelve, he wanted to take saxophone lessons. I did not want him to; a saxophone was so noisy and jazzy. So then he wanted to try the cello."

[30] Emanuel Wishnow, telephone interview with author, Oct. 29, 1992; Brugh and Reid, Sept. 1936, 82; Hall, *Life Story*, 21.

[31] *Beatrice Daily Sun*, Mar. 25, 1926, p. 2.