

Robert Taylor's Nebraska Years
by E.A. Kral

Preface

“Robert Taylor: A Golden-Era Hollywood Movie King from Nebraska,” *Beatrice Daily Sun*, October 8, 1993, 48-page supplement, text version.

“Robert Taylor: Glamorous movie star of Hollywood’s golden era, role model of decency, and world patriot,” *The Crete News*, April 1, 2009, p. B-12.

Outline of Robert Taylor Accomplishments and Recognition on the National and State Levels, Gage County Historical Society, May 2009, 12 pages.



Gage County Historical Society Museum
Robert Taylor shown in 1936

Preface

This Internet text version of my previous manuscripts on Robert Taylor is provided for use by the Gage County Historical Society Museum in Beatrice, Nebraska, so that anyone may learn more about the formative years of Gage County's famous movie star during Hollywood's golden years.

I first began my study of Taylor after 1991 when I retired from 30 years as a public school teacher and returned to my home area at nearby Wilber. While researching various sources and interviewing many who knew the movie star before and after his professional acting career started in 1934, I benefited not only from Taylor's family, especially his son Terry, but also from the generous efforts of many in Gage County, including the staffs at the Gage County Museum and the *Beatrice Daily Sun*.

Special mention must be made of Dr. C.T. Frerichs, who helped initiate the annual Robert Taylor Film Festival in the early 1990s, and contributed in so many other ways, including assistance in fundraising efforts for the Robert Taylor Scholarship with the Beatrice Educational Foundation.

Another who provided leadership was David I. Maurstad, former Beatrice Mayor, Nebraska State Senator and Nebraska Lieutenant Governor, as he played a major role in the designation of the Robert Taylor Memorial Highway on the portion of the U.S. Highway 136 between Beatrice and Filley. The idea to recognize the movie star had been presented to him by Hollywood biographer Jane Ellen Wayne during her visit to Beatrice in September 1992.

An unexpected benefit from my study of Taylor for the 1993 publication was the discovery that many Nebraskans had distinguished themselves nationally in the performing arts. So I decided in 1995 to investigate Nebraskans who became high achievers nationally in all fields of endeavor – from agriculture to education to music to science and sports. As a consequence of my part-time efforts since then, I was able to create what has become the Internet document titled *900 Famous Nebraskans*, which is hosted on the websites of the Nebraska State Education Association, the Nebraska Press Association and the Gage County Historical Society.

For being able to make such good news available about nationally distinguished Nebraskans, I remain indebted to Robert Taylor for awakening me to pursue such a worthwhile, exciting project. And in the preparation of this Internet document titled "Robert Taylor's Nebraska Years," I am grateful for the encouragement of Museum Director Lesa Arterburn and Curator Rita Clawson as well as the marvelous assistance of typist Joan Allen and graphic designer Shayde Goracke-Voller.

E.A. Kral
May 1, 2009

Robert Taylor: A Golden Era Hollywood Movie King From Nebraska

Copyright © 1993 by E.A. Kral

Original 48-page supplement published with October 8, 1993 *Beatrice Daily Sun*

Several native Nebraskans have enjoyed successful Hollywood careers to date. 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 celebrated are Marlon Brando, Omaha, who won Academy Awards in 1954 and 1972; Sandy Dennis, Hastings, who won an Academy Award in 1967 for best supporting actress; Henry Fonda, Grand Island, who appeared in 83 films, received an honorary Academy Award in 1981 for lifetime achievement, and won an Academy Award in 1982; and Harold Lloyd, Burchard, who received an honorary Academy Award in 1952 for his citizenship and his roles as a silent film comedian.

Also achieving the stature of the most celebrated is Robert Taylor, who appeared in 80 screen and television films from 1934 to 1969. One of the most decent famous Hollywood personalities that ever lived, Taylor never forgot his Nebraska roots.

A 1929 graduate of Beatrice High School, he was born Spangler Arlington Brugh in Filley on August 5, 1911. His name Robert Taylor (a name he legally adopted in February 1943) was given to him by L. B. Mayer, chief executive of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) in Culver City, California. The city was coincidentally founded and built by Nebraska-born Harry H. Culver, a real estate developer who had purchased on July 25, 1913 the land on which the city was established.

Culver was a native of Milford, attended Doane College and the University of Nebraska, lived in the Philippines, and while there, worked on the William Howard Taft-owned newspaper. In 1916, he married actress Lillian Roberts. By the time Culver died in 1946, he had amassed a fortune of some \$3 million and was also known as the founder of what he planned to call "University City", which presently is the home of Loyola Marymount University in the Westchester area of Los Angeles.

According to Hollywood biographer Jane Ellen Wayne, author of *Robert Taylor* (1973,1987), the first book-length history of the Filley native, Taylor was "the man with the perfect face". Cast by MGM as a romantic hero in the 1930s, the blue-eyed, black-haired 175-pound Nebraskan stood almost 5 feet 11 inches tall, and had a widow's peak that added to his Box Office appeal, ranking fourth in 1936, third in 1937, and sixth in 1938. In a *New York Daily News* poll of 20 million people in key American and Canadian cities in 1937, he placed second to Clark Gable as "King of the Movies". He also set two records as an actor. Taylor was the lowest-paid contract player in Hollywood history with \$35 per week in 1934, and he was under contract with MGM for 25 years, the longest ever with one studio.

The closest Taylor came to an "Oscar" was as narrator of the Academy Award-winning *The Fighting Lady*, the 1944 documentary of a U.S. aircraft carrier in World War II. He was the first American actor to appear in a film made at MGM's studio in England; it was *A Yank At Oxford* (1938), a movie in which he bared his hairy chest to counter critics of his "pretty boy" image. He also played the lead role in *Quo Vadis?* (1951), the most expensive motion picture produced at the time; its \$7 million in production costs surpassed the \$4 million spent on the 1939 classic *Gone with the Wind*. In 1952, he became the first Hollywood film studio contract

star to appear on television when he made a guest appearance on CBS-TV's *The Ed Sullivan Show* along with film clips of his movie *Above And Beyond*. In the spring of 1954, he was voted the most popular star by the Foreign and Hollywood Press Association, which represented some half a billion moviegoers worldwide. And after his death in 1969, a building on the MGM lot in Culver City was named after him until December 1989.

Robert Taylor is one of only 170 persons to leave their footprints, handprints, and autographs cemented in the forecourt of Grauman's Chinese Theater at 6925 Hollywood Boulevard in Hollywood. (This most famous movie house in the world was built in 1927 for theater magnate Sid Grauman. Since 1972, it has been renamed Mann's Chinese Theater.) It was on June 11, 1941 that Taylor and Barbara Stanwyck, his 5 feet 5 inch-tall, auburn-haired, blue-eyed first wife from 1939 to 1951, wrote "To Sid - We love you" on a block of cement near the main entrance. She was a famous star with 88 films to her credit and in 1982 a recipient of an Academy Award for lifetime achievement.

More immortality was gained on February 6, 1960 when he was among the original 1,558 movie stars to have his star placed on the Star Walk (or Walk of Fame), which extends some three-and-a-half miles along both sides of Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Streets. Taylor's star is located at 1500 Vine on the east side of the street near the famous intersection of Hollywood and Vine. Nearby are the stars of Henry Fonda, John Wayne, Gary Grant, Frank Sinatra, and Mae West. Many tourists stay at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, the site of the first public presentation of the Academy Awards in 1929, which is across the street from Mann's Chinese Theater and just a few blocks from Taylor's star on the Walk of Fame. As of September 30, 1993, there have been 1,993 such stars unveiled, according to the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce.

Fame came to him initially after his performance opposite Irene Dunne in *Magnificent Obsession* (1935), his eighth film. Later, on January 18, 1937, *Time* magazine called him "cinema's most passionately admired matinee idol since the late Rudolph Valentino." The press compared Taylor to Gary Cooper and Clark Gable. His many leading ladies included Janet Gaynor, Barbara Stanwyck, Joan Crawford, Greta Garbo, Hedy Lamarr, Greer Garson, Vivien Leigh, Norma Shearer, Lana Turner, Katharine Hepburn, Ava Gardner, Deborah Kerr, Eleanor Parker, and Elizabeth Taylor, the latter receiving as a seventeen-year-old her first screen kiss from him in *The Conspirator* (1950).

His screen roles as a romantic lover brought him acclaim along with some bittersweet public experiences. Unlike Valentino and Gable's screen approaches, the slick and dangerous, the rough and rugged, that attracted a female following, "Taylor was all-American, innocent and gentle. Women wanted to mother 'Pretty Boy'. Their dreams of him were clean; their search for male kindness, loyalty, softness and perfection ended in Taylor's image," wrote biographer Wayne. He exemplified what MGM executive L. B. Mayer wanted in his actors and actresses, and Taylor was content to conform, being a "company man" throughout, and happy with his work. In later years, he refused to play opposite female roles considerably younger than his.

The November 23, 1936 *Life* magazine article "MR. BRUGH...pronounced ROBERT TAYLOR" reported that in his first love scene rehearsal with the incomparable Greta Garbo in *Camille* (1937), "Taylor was so nervous that he allowed her to slip from his arms to the floor. But Garbo treated him much less like a schoolboy than she has some of her 16 previous leading men..." (Years later he admitted to having one date with Garbo during the filming, but he provided few details, which was characteristic of him.) In the summer of 1936, he made a personal appearance at the Texas Centennial in Dallas, and was met at the airport by two

thousand women, all wanting to touch him. Later as he was about to greet one of the beauty contestants before 36,000 people at the Cotton Bowl, she "put out a pretty hand, took one look at the screen star, and fainted." He admitted later in life that this was one of his most embarrassing moments, he continued to have mixed feelings about being mobbed by fans, and he resented some of the critics who belabored the issue of his "beautiful face".

Aside from *Magnificent Obsession* and *Camille*, his best movies involved roles as a soldier, an outlaw, a tough-guy, a hard-bitten sergeant, and a shining knight in armor respectively. His *Waterloo Bridge* (1940) earned praise, and Taylor himself considered it his favorite film. About *Billy The Kid* (1941), one reviewer wrote, "Taylor gives a distinguished performance in the title role," and others commented favorably. It was the first of several Westerns for him and his first color film, and he once said, "I'll tell ya — if I could have lived in another century, I'da chosen somewhere in the West. I'd be a Cowboy, and maybe that's why I liked Billy." For *Johnny Eager* (1942), there were mixed reviews, but off-screen, Taylor fell in love with his co-star Lana Turner, though she would not break up his then-marriage to Barbara Stanwyck. (Though most of his involvements later were discreet, he did have a brief affair in 1948 with actress Ava Gardner when his marriage to Stanwyck was unsatisfactory to him after he returned from the Navy in World War II.) There was much praise for his performance in *Bataan* (1943), and his role as the knight Ivanhoe opposite Elizabeth Taylor and Joan Fontaine in the costume epic *Ivanhoe* (1952) helped it become one of the top-ten grossing films that year.

His most notable television performance was as the star of *The Detectives* and *Robert Taylor's Detectives* on ABC-TV and NBC-TV from 1959 to 1962, which included appearances of 5 feet 7 inch-tall, black-haired, brown-eyed Ursula Thiess, his second wife. He was also host and occasional star of the syndicated *Death Valley Days* from 1966 to 1968. Earlier in his career, he performed at various times on radio, especially *Lux Radio Theater* (1934-1951), *Screen Guild Theater* (1939-1951), and *The Prudential Family Hour of Stars* (1941-1949). In 1938, he was the emcee of *Good News*, which aired from 1937 to 1940.

One of the most beloved Hollywood stars ever, Taylor had a personal life just as distinguished if not more so than his professional accomplishments. Aside from critics who belabored his handsome looks during early portions of his career and headlines about his marriage to and divorce from Stanwyck, publicity centered around his outdoor interests and his family life after his marriage to actress Ursula Thiess in 1954. Featured on the cover of *Life* magazine on June 4, 1951, Ursula Schmidt Thiess was born on May 15, 1924 in Hamburg, Germany, and appeared as a leading lady in five movies in the 1950s. To them were born son Terence on June 18, 1955 and daughter Tessa on August 16, 1959. There was a full-page color photo of his wife Ursula and him in Western attire alongside their horses on the cover of the September 25, 1960 *Parade* magazine. And a classic full-page color photo of Taylor and his daughter Tessa in the December 1965 issue of *McCall's* magazine, to mention the most prominent press coverage.

A private person, a perfectionist, a no-nonsense kind of man, a person who often stated "I'm just a punk kid from Nebraska," Taylor understood his obligations to his fans. And his lifelong humility despite his stardom was best described in a March 3, 1968 Omaha *Sunday World Herald Magazine of the Midlands* article, when an anonymous Grand Island resident was quoted as saying, "You know, I'd like Robert Taylor even if he were a plumber." On the national level, biographer Wayne quoted *New York Herald Tribune* reporter Joe Hyams as writing that Taylor "is so normal he is almost a bore. He has never been involved in a scandal, never been awarded an Oscar and never been scalded by the critics. No one in Hollywood seems to have a

word to say about him other than he's too damn nice." And columnist William F. Buckley in the February 1, 1990 *New York Daily News* quoted film director George Cukor as commenting before his death in 1983 that "Robert Taylor was my favorite actor. He was a gentleman. That's rare in Hollywood."

As an outdoorsman, he was "a man's man" and was beloved for that, too. His flying interest emerged after the movie *Flight Command* (1940), when he bought a single-engine plane and took lessons for a pilot's license. After World War II, when he served in the U.S. Navy from 1943 to 1945 as a flight instructor and narrator of 17 training films, MGM bought him a twin-engine Beechcraft which he, along with a private co-pilot, flew regularly until the early 1960s. In a feature in the May 21, 1961 *Family Weekly* magazine, Taylor stated he became a hunter during his more mature years after he met actor Gary Cooper at Sun Valley, Idaho in 1939. Occasional hunting companions of note were novelist Ernest Hemingway and actors Wallace Beery, Clark Gable, Robert Stack, and John Wayne. (Taylor and Gable were good friends, and Taylor was one of the active pallbearers at Gable's funeral in November 1960, reported Jane Ellen Wayne in her 1993 biography *Clark Gable, Portrait of A Misfit*.) Taylor hunted pheasants and ducks near Bakersfield, California, in central and western Nebraska, especially the Ord area and Lisco, where he stayed a few times at Omaha brewer Arthur Storz' famous Ducklore Lodge. He also hunted in north central Wyoming near Buffalo, where he and his wife Ursula, who became a hunter and outdoor enthusiast, often stayed at an old homestead cabin from 1954 to 1963. They also fished and rode horseback there, and Taylor frequently went elsewhere to do his deep-sea and trout fishing. In 1959, when he purchased a 113-acre ranch at 3099 Mandeville Canyon Road in Brentwood, a suburb of Los Angeles, his outdoor interests expanded. There were some 16 miles of bridle paths, and the family kept a dozen horses as well as rabbits, goats, chickens, and dogs.

The Outdoorsman of the Year Award for 1954 from the Winchester Repeating Arms Company of New Haven, Connecticut was given to Taylor "as the man who through his prominence and personal example has done most to increase interest in our American heritage of good marksmanship and sportsmanship in the field." And he was posthumously inducted into the Hall of Great Western Performers in 1970 by the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Taylor was the sixth of the 39 motion picture and television actors to be so honored by 1993; Tom Mix was the first.

Opened in 1965, the Western Heritage Center, housed on 38 acres of land at 1700 Northeast 63rd Street, represents 17 western states, including Nebraska. A portrait of Taylor hangs in a special gallery alongside those of his fellow inductees, such as Gene Autry, Gary Cooper, Hoot Gibson, Ronald Reagan, Roy Rogers, Barbara Stanwyck, and John Wayne.

That Taylor never forgot his Nebraska roots has been documented by the testimony of various individuals who knew him personally and in various newspaper accounts. Biographer Wayne quotes his first wife Barbara Stanwyck in an interview about their marriage just after World War II as saying, "He never broke away from Nebraska and still has a sense of belonging there." Sometime after his marriage to his second wife Ursula Thiess in 1954, he expressed interest in a 160-acre farm at the northeast corner of 19th & Dorsey in Beatrice. According to real estate and farm manager William A. Eyth, the property, which had a white frame house and red barn, had been owned at the time by Dr. Frances Knapp, but Taylor never pursued the matter. And in his November 7, 1967 letter to Robert Marvin, then co-owner and editor of the *Beatrice Daily Sun*, Taylor wrote, "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 by what I figgered (sic) my old friends and associates back in Nebraska would think of it"

Of the 19 documented visits made to his home state between 1936 and 1968, most were in conjunction with his hunting trips and his Mother's visits to Beatrice. Four others are noteworthy for other reasons. His first return to Beatrice as a movie star occurred in 1936, and it was celebrated as a homecoming. The front page of the *Beatrice Daily Sun* carried the banner headline "CHEERING THRONG GREET'S TAYLOR ON ARRIVAL." On October 25, 1963, he returned to Doane College in Crete, where he attended classes from 1929 to 1931, to help publicize a \$5 million campaign to raise funds. While there, he received the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. In February 1967, he gave a presentation at the Nebraska Centennial Banquet in North Platte sponsored by the local chamber of commerce and attended by 1,000 people. In mid-January 1968, he was presented the "Big Wig" Award in Grand Island, where he was present for the opening of Multi-View TV, of which he was an investor and board chairman. He had become a member of the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce in July 1966.

Robert Taylor's death of lung cancer at the age of 57 occurred on June 8, 1969 in Santa Monica, California, and his obituary was reported the next day on the front page of the *New York Times*. His funeral service at the Church of the Reconciliation at Forest Lawn in Glendale was attended by a crowd of some 400 members, including his former first wife Barbara Stanwyck, who had vowed after their divorce that became final in 1952, "There will be no other man in my life," and there never was. Long-time friend and then governor of California Ronald Reagan, later the 40th President of the United States from 1981-89, delivered the eulogy, in which he commented in part, "Bob Taylor became one of the all-time greats of motion picture stardom...His face instantly recognizable in every corner of the world...I'll remember how a fellow named Bob really preferred blue jeans and boots."

In an emotional conclusion, he turned to widow Ursula and her children, and said, in part, "You are going to be proud of simple things...he had like honor and honesty, responsibility to those he worked for and who worked for him – standing up for what he believed and, yes, even a simple old-fashioned love for his country, and above all, an inner humility." In New York City, his former leading lady Greta Garbo broke down and wept when she learned of his death.

With the kind of accolades, fame, and success Robert Taylor earned after 1934, the year he began work for MGM, with the loyalty to Nebraska he retained for the rest of his life, intriguing questions arise. For example, what were the various family, childhood, and cultural factors that may have contributed to his success, even though he inherited his handsomeness and talent and benefited from the mentorship of MGM executive L.B. Mayer? Is there an explanation for his attachment to his home state of Nebraska? And what has happened to his family since his death?

Ancestry

A brief review of Taylor's genealogy reveals the earliest known ancestor on the paternal side of his family was Hermanus Bruch, born in 1722 in Bruchsal, Germany, which is located in the present-day state of Baden-Wurtemberg. Nestled in the Rhine Valley along the Black Forest area just south of Heidelberg and some 30 kilometers north of the French border, Bruchsal had a population of 37,351 in 1980. It has one of the finest Baroque castles in the nation, and is adjacent to some of the finest vineyards in Europe. First mentioned in 796 AD, the city has been rebuilt after 80 percent of it was destroyed in World War II.

According to a genealogy compiled by Phoebe Brugh Stuart in 1969 and privately

published in *The Brugh-Stuart Family* by Dr. Robert B. Stuart of Erie, Pennsylvania in 1977, Hermanus Bruch (1722-1794), the fifth great grandfather of Taylor, settled in York County in the southern part of Pennsylvania after arriving in Philadelphia in 1743. He was a county official, and belonged to the Conestoga Baptist Church. His son Jacob (1752-1828), one of six children of Hermanus and Catherine M. Bruch, was a farmer who changed the spelling of Bruch (which in German means "marsh") to Brugh. He married Sophia Trimmer, daughter of a family like the Brughs, which owned land near East Berlin in York and Adams Counties. The fourth great grandfather of Taylor, Jacob Brugh and his wife Sophia were members of the German Baptist Congregation, and they, like other immigrants from German lands, were referred to as "Pennsylvania Dutch", a term Taylor used with pride in describing his Brugh ancestry.

It is through Sophia Trimmer Brugh (1752-1835) that Taylor became related to Richard M. Nixon, the 37th President of the United States and earlier Vice President with Dwight D. Eisenhower, the 34th President. Sophia's father was Andrew Trimmer, brother of Anthony Trimmer (1724-1754), the fourth great grandfather of President Nixon. According to a July 9, 1993 letter from Missionary Joe Hill of the Family History Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah, Taylor and President Nixon were sixth cousins once removed. (Coincidentally, Missionary Hill met Taylor in 1945 as a weather observer at the Dallas Naval Air Station at Grand Prairie, Texas. Taylor had landed there and needed flight clearance to take off. Said Mr. Hill, "He was a very humble man, and did not try to impress anyone with who he was. He just took his turn at the desk where flight clearances were issued.") Neither Nixon nor Taylor realized they were related to each other even though both did have some contact professionally. In October 1947, Nixon, then a California Congressman, congratulated Taylor for his patriotism in testifying before the House Un-American Activities Committee inquiring into Communist activity in Hollywood. In the 1950s, Taylor, a Republican, was a member of then-Vice President Nixon's Celebrities Committee.

The ancestry of Taylor continued with his third great grandfather Andrew Brugh (1782-1860), one of seven children of Jacob and Sophia Trimmer Brugh. His second great grandfather was Jacob Brugh (1807-1859), one of eight children of Andrew and Mary Ditto Brugh. His first great grandfather was Spangler Brugh (1830-1917), one of five children of Jacob and Lydia Spangler Brugh, who moved from York County, Pennsylvania to Hartford City, Indiana about 1837. They subsequently moved to Dodge County, Nebraska in 1861, where he was one of the early settlers, living on a farm for three years, then becoming one of the founders of Fremont, where he engaged in a hotel business. In 1875, Spangler Brugh became a farmer near Wahoo in Saunders County for some 15 years before returning to his old home in Fremont.

His grandfather Jacob Andrew Brugh (1853-1937), one of five children of Spangler and Nancy Shick Brugh, received his early schooling in Fremont, then married Laura E. Davis in 1875. He lived on his family farm near Wahoo until 1887, when he then moved his family to Idalia, Colorado to homestead and engage in the cattle business. In 1897, he relocated to a farm in Section 9 of Rockford Township in Gage County, Nebraska, and after 1916 resided in the village of Holmesville, which is located 2 miles east and 4 miles south of Beatrice. The seven children of Jacob and Laura Davis Brugh were Maude, LeRoy, Milow, Nancie, Aurthur, Maybelle, and Spangler.

Taylor's father was Spangler Andrew Brugh (1881-1933), who received his education from the Fremont and Arlington, Nebraska Public Schools, and who, like most of the males in the Brugh ancestry, farmed for some time, in his case, in Rockford Township east of Beatrice.

The ancestry on the maternal side of Taylor's family is English and Scotch, that is, the

Stanhope name originated in Durham County, England in the 14th Century. The earliest-known ancestor on his mother's paternal side is seventh great grandfather Jonathan Stanhope (1632-1702), followed by sixth great grandfather Joseph Stanhope, fifth great grandfather Jonathan Stanhope, and fourth great grandfather Samuel Stanhope Sr., all of whom lived in Sudbury, located about 50 miles northeast of London. It was third great grandfather Samuel Stanhope Jr. (1756-1839), who emigrated to North America and arrived in time to serve in the American Revolutionary War for nearly a year, enlisting a few days after the battle in Lexington, Massachusetts in April 1775 and re-enlisting in September 1776. Second great grandfather Levi Stanhope (1783-1861) lived in Attica, New York, but great grandfather Charles Stanhope (1813-1874) relocated to Waukesha, Wisconsin by mid-century. There, one connection with Scotch ancestry was made when he married Nancy McLaughlin, a native of New York and daughter of Archibald McLaughlin, a native of Scotland. From this marriage came grandfather Archibald Levi Stanhope (1850-1930).

The Scotch ancestry connection was further advanced on the mother's maternal side when Taylor's grandmother Eva Adele Barber Stanhope (1856-1950), also of Waukesha, Wisconsin, married A.L. Stanhope on December 24, 1874. Eva was the daughter of Manville Barber (1829-1873) of Vermont, who married Adelia Campbell (1835-1908) of Groton Hollow, New York; Adelia Campbell Barber, whose father was Warren Campbell of Scotland, died in Filley, Nebraska in April 1908.

The Archibald L. Stanhope family lived in Oceana County, Michigan for three years, then rode in a covered wagon to Gage County, Nebraska to establish their home on a farm previously owned by Andrew Nickell about 1 1/2 miles south and 1 mile west of Filley in Section 6 of Sherman Township. From 1878 to 1893 they owned up to 230 acres, and lived in a four-room frame house. After November 1889, they lived in Filley on the northeast corner of the intersection of Ford and Johnson Streets just east across from the Methodist Church. The house was of wood frame, with four rooms on the first floor and three on the second. From 1888 to 1933 the Stanhope family owned this property in Block 10 Lots 13-14. (One block east at the corner of Livingston and Johnson Streets near the Lutheran Church was the location of the hit-and-run accident involving A.L. Stanhope on October 19, 1930. Despite Dr. Brugh's notice published in the October 31 edition of the *Beatrice Daily Sun* that a reward of \$100 would be given for information leading to the arrest of the hit-and-run driver, the person responsible for the incident was not discovered.) From 1897 to 1918, the Stanhope family owned the Haymes Eames Elevator (later renamed the Central Granaries Elevator), one of two grain elevators in the town. After that, they reportedly lived on income from oil leases on land near Muskogee, Oklahoma. The seven children were Burton and Eva, both of whom died in infancy, Ethel, Myrtle, Effie, Maplet, and Ruth, the latter becoming Taylor's mother. Several of the children attended the Filley Public Schools.

The parents and Taylor's childhood experiences

The basic facts of Taylor's immediate family history before Hollywood can be recounted with much accuracy. The marriage of his father Spangler Andrew Brugh (1881-1933) and his mother Ruth Adela Stanhope (1887-1974) occurred in the Gage County village of Filley on January 21, 1904, stated *The Beatrice Weekly Times* of the same date. It was part of a double wedding with Ruth's sister Ethel to Robert Flaws of Webster City, Iowa. Spangler Brugh was listed as a resident of the hamlet of Rockford, since he either farmed the Brugh land located four miles east, two miles south and one-fourth mile west of Beatrice in Section 9 of Rockford Township or rented a farm nearby. From about 1905 to 1909, he was manager of the Stanhope-owned elevator, and their home from 1907 to 1913 was located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Gage

and Peoria Streets near the present-day building of Filley Consolidated School District 166. The Brugh house was one story, had 4-5 rooms, faced north, and might have had a back porch, reported Richard Bay, a 1940 Filley High graduate who in 1937 helped tear down the wood-frame structure owned at the time by his mother. It wasn't insulated, and there wasn't running water. The family would have used a hand-pump for water, and homes in Filley had outdoor toilets. The stove would have been wood or coal burning. The 1910 population of Filley was 194.

Elton Perkey, a 1931 graduate of Filley High and author of *Perkey's Nebraska Place Names* in 1982, presented a summary of his knowledge of Robert Taylor for publication in the 1983 Filley history titled *Once Upon A Time*. In it he recalled that his grandfather John Burbank hired Taylor's father to husk corn one autumn, and wrote, "Grandfather said that 'Spang' was the fastest cornhusker he ever knew." Perkey also recollected that in 1927 Arlington and his father attended the Gage County cornhusking contest held at the Ernest Dell farm. Dr. Brugh wanted to enter the contest, but friends said, "Spang, you have been away too long, and your hands won't hold out." Perkey felt sure Dr. Brugh entered the contest anyway.

Because doctors could not cure Ruth Brugh's ailing condition (she had been in poor health all her young life), Spangler decided to study medicine in order to find a way to help her. So during the 1909-10 school year, both enrolled in the American School of Osteopathy in Kirksville, Missouri (now called the Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine). While there, the couple resided in a house at the southwest corner of 4th & Pierce Streets, and Ruth's health improved. After one year, they returned to Filley, where Spangler resumed work at the Stanhope family's grain business.

On August 5, 1911, Ruth gave birth to Spangler Arlington Brugh (later known as Robert Taylor). According to birth certificate #508-11 on file at the vital statistics section of the Nebraska State Department of Health, the attendant was Dr. George H. Brash, who was a physician and surgeon in Beatrice from 1899 until his death in 1924. The August 14 issue of the Beatrice *Semi-Weekly Express* reported, "Mr. and Mrs. S.A. Brugh are the proud parents of a baby son born August 5...." He was their only child, and the mother had chosen the middle name of Arlington after a romantic hero in a novel she had read as a young girl.

After young Arlington was only two weeks old, Anna Thomsen Andrew at the age of 17 moved in with the Brughs and took care of young Arlington, according to a February 10, 1984 letter by Dr. Harry Hepperlen on file at the Gage County Historical Society in Beatrice. And her niece Lola Thompson Armstrong reported that Anna kept a scrapbook of Robert Taylor's activities the rest of her life. The September 5, 1911 *Semi-Weekly Express* reported that Dr. Preston Y. Gass, a Beatrice osteopath, "was out to see Mrs. S.A. Brugh between trains on Monday." And on February 15, 1912 it carried the news that the "the little son of Mr. and Mrs. S.A. Brugh has been seriously ill the last week, but is much better at this writing." Not much else is known of Taylor during these very early years. But in 1913, the family did live for several months in Muskogee, Oklahoma, looking after farm property they owned there.

They returned to Kirksville in February 1914, where the father resumed his studies and graduated in January 1916 after completing the three-year program. According to the 1917 *Osteoblast*, the yearbook of the American School of Osteopathy, Dr. Brugh was a member of the Atlas Club, a fraternity devoted to advancing scientific truth and elevating "the intellectual, moral, social, and professional conditions of its members." (The 1916 *Osteoblast* published a photo of Arlington at the age of 8 months among photos of other babies of members of the Class of 1916.) During these two years, the father sometimes took young Arlington to his medical classes, and while trying to pronounce difficult Latin and medical terms, the boy developed a stammer. So the

family moved to a farm home 1 1/2 miles from Kirksville to live with a farm couple and to permit Arlington to roam in the outdoors. He soon quit stammering, and developed a love for the outdoors the rest of his life.

In January 1916, S.A. Brugh, holder of a doctorate in osteopathic medicine, moved to Fremont, Nebraska, which in 1910 had a population of 8,718. According to the 1916 edition of the *Fremont City Directory*, his office was in Rooms 416-417 of the First National Bank Building at 501-503 Main Street. (Currently the structure is an office building with an address of 505 Main.) While an osteopath in Fremont for 1 1/2 years, Dr. Brugh delivered in Lincoln a presentation entitled "Technique" at the September 1916 annual meeting of the Nebraska State Association of Osteopaths, which was first organized in December 1900. At this time, osteopathy was a new field.

According to Georgia Ann Walter's *Osteopathic Medicine: Past and Present*, 2nd edition (Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, 1987), formulation of its theories was first made in 1874 by Andrew T. Still, a native of the state of Virginia. The first school of osteopathy was chartered at Kirksville, Missouri in 1892. In Still's 1910 book *Osteopathy, Research & Practice*, reprinted by Eastland Press of Seattle in 1992, osteopathy is defined as a system of treating diseases by scientific manipulation of the spine, muscles, and ligaments. It is based on the idea that "a sick person is ill all over and must be treated as a whole individual and not just for one ailment." Also advocated were sanitation and hygiene, but drugs were discouraged.

A bill to regulate and authorize the practice of osteopathy in the state of Nebraska had become law in 1901; it outlined qualifications for a doctor of osteopathy, established criteria for obtaining a license, and prohibited an osteopath from prescribing drugs and performing operative surgery. (By the 1950s, most of the nation's osteopaths had the same legal status as a medical doctor and could diagnose and treat virtually any ailment, using drugs and performing surgery in the vast majority of states. Many also used manipulation less often and applied techniques similar to those of medical doctors.) Presently Nebraska statutes administered by the State Department of Health permit osteopaths to use surgical procedures commonly used by general practitioners and to serve as an assistant in more complex surgery. And those who have satisfied certain training and knowledge requirements set by the Board of Examiners in Medicine and Surgery may prescribe and administer drugs and medicines in Nebraska.

According to the 1931 *Membership Directory of the American Osteopathic Association*, there were 88 osteopaths listed in Nebraska; in 1992, there were 42 listed.

During the 1 1/2 years the Brugh family lived in Fremont, they resided at 450 East 6th Street. In the fall of 1916, Arlington attended kindergarten at East Elementary School located at 540 East 3rd Street. His teacher was G. Mount. According to records at the Central Administration Building of the Fremont Public Schools, he attended the 1st semester, then was promoted. Very little else is known about Arlington's education in Fremont other than the encouragement he received from his mother to read books.

By September 1917, the S.A. Brugh family had moved to Beatrice, which, according to the 1920 census, had a population of 9,664, making it the 5th largest city in Nebraska at the time. Dr. Brugh went into partnership with his acquaintance Dr. P.Y. Gass, also a doctor of osteopathy who had a large practice and served that fall as president of the Nebraska Association of Osteopaths. First mention of the Brugh family in the *Beatrice Daily Sun* was on November 1, 1917 in the local news: "Drs. Gass and Brugh yesterday moved their offices from over the Mercer B. Walker Dry Goods Store to rooms over the Union State Bank." At the time, the Walker Store was located at 505 Court, the Union State Bank at 422 Court. In 1920, Dr. Gass moved to San Bernardino, California, leaving Dr. Brugh as sole owner of the practice. On June 22, 1925, Brugh moved his

office to rooms on the second floor of the brick building at 104 1/2 North Sixth Street, where he remained until his death in October 1933. The suite of rooms was then occupied from 1933 to 1935 by Dr. Helen M. Wieters, who, records in the County Court of Gage County reveal, purchased all office equipment, furniture, and fixtures from the Estate of Dr. Brugh for \$1,500, payable within five years.

Dr. Wieters, a native of Lanham, Nebraska, had worked in Beatrice banks during World War I, and in 1929 earned her doctorate in osteopathy at Kirksville. Before and after her brief practice in Beatrice, she served in Lanham and in hospitals in Grove City, Pennsylvania and Bennington, Vermont. According to an obituary in the October 11, 1983 issue of the *Fairbury (NE) Journal-News*, she was an osteopath in Fairbury from 1941 until her retirement in 1971. Meanwhile, the suite of rooms at 104 1/2 North 6th Street was occupied by chiropractor Edgar E. Best from 1935 to 1959. The brick building still stands, and is presently owned by Scully Estates, which initially took out a lease on the property in 1950.

The Brugh family at first resided in a wood-frame house at 922 North 9th Street, a property they bought in 1919 for \$3,500 and sold in 1924 for \$4,000. (The house currently belongs to Milton F. Brase, who has owned and lived in it since 1941.) For Dr. Brugh, the residence was a 12-block walk to his office, though he did own a touring car for longer trips. As the July 16, 1919 issue of the *Beatrice Daily Sun* disclosed, his car "was damaged badly at the corner of 8th & Court when it was run into by R. Jobman, who offered to pay for all repairs." For Arlington, the 9th & Garfield home was only a five-block walk to Fairview Elementary School located at 13th & Summit.

From sometime in 1921 until the spring of 1924, the Brughs rented the first floor of a wood-frame house at 812 High Street from Maria Neuhauser, a kind woman who was the owner and lived upstairs. Both families shared the main bathroom and Arlington, according to biographer Wayne, was often invited to have breakfast in "Auntie" Neuhauser's kitchenette. In the June 7, 1950 issue of the *Beatrice Daily Sun*, a letter from Taylor was published in which he fondly recalled "Mrs. Neuhauser's wonderful pancakes." This house, currently owned by Harold F. Cox, was a five-block walk to Dr. Brugh's office, and for Arlington, it was only a four-block walk to Central Elementary School, which was in the same location as the present Junior High at 510 Elk Street.

The final residence of the S.A. Brugh family in Beatrice was the six-room brick bungalow in Penner's Addition at 901 North 6th Street, which was purchased in April 1924 for \$8,500 from Grant Ford, the original owner. As reported in the November 18, 1921 *Beatrice Daily Sun*, this particular bungalow was constructed for \$6,500, and it was one of 34 similar houses erected that year. After the death of Dr. Brugh in October 1933 from an infection after emergency surgery at the Lutheran Hospital for an inflamed or ruptured gall bladder the previous August, various family possessions were auctioned off. Ownership of the house, 320 acres of land in Kit Carson County, Colorado, and 160 acres of land near Muskogee, Oklahoma passed to his widow Ruth A. Brugh.

In April 1935, the house at 901 North 6th Street was sold to Paul Henderson. Today it is owned by public school teacher Sue Sindlar. Complete with an attached garage, which later was expanded into a double garage, the one-story house contains a small kitchen with an adjacent dining room and an alcove, all facing Logan Street on the south. There are three bedrooms facing north and west, with one bathroom in the center that has fixtures dating to 1931. Aside from the basement being "finished", a few windows filled in on the north, the sun porch remodeled into an alcove, and the fireplace converted to gas fuel, the home is still very much as it was when the Brughs lived in it.

Though these basic facts about his family history and its genealogy do provide background about Taylor's roots, the influence of the Stanhope and Brugh families during his formative years is of interest. Taylor himself was quoted in January 1937 by Gladys Hall, author of *Robert Taylor's True Life Story* (Dell Publishing Company), as saying, "No one except my mother, father, and grandparents really 'influenced' my life or left any mark upon me." Moreover, it is clear there were other individuals who contributed to his development, including those in the school, in the community, and at Doane College, and he acknowledged them later in life.

Taylor's father was by all accounts an excellent osteopath, very considerate of everyone, and a wonderful neighbor. About 5 feet 10 inches tall, black-haired but balding, stout, nice looking, well dressed, and outgoing, Dr. Brugh ordered first aid procedures, delivered babies, made house calls, and was careful not to exceed restrictions placed on his profession by state law. Ed Bede Jr., now a Lincoln resident, was a neighbor who as a child lived at 814 North 6th Street. He recalled that Dr. Brugh was very gentle and had a sense of humor. Once when Bede was at his office, the doctor put him on his knee, twisted his ear, and asked, "Have you had your violin tuned?" (The ear was the violin.) On another occasion in the late 1920s, the doctor visited the Bede home to treat Ed's mother, and the doctor, like others in the neighborhood, spoke in the German language. Jeanne Barger St. John, now a Beatrice resident who was a neighbor across the street when the Brughs lived at 812 High Street, recalled an incident when she was a 4th grader. She was forbidden to use a bike, but had ridden a neighbor's bike when suddenly she saw her father coming. Jeanne lost control and drove into a row of peony bushes on the Barger property. After her father expressed disappointment in her and continued his walk, Dr. Brugh came to the rescue by helping her up and brushing off the ants that collected on her clothes.

St. John also remembered that Dr. Brugh visited her sister Grace every day for a year to gently manipulate her throat after she fractured her larynx on a staircase accident. Though her sister was voiceless and medical doctors could find no cure, she recovered totally after Dr. Brugh's ministrations. Eva Jamison Warkentin Unruh, a first cousin of Taylor's and now a resident of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, recalled on her visits to the doctor's office that there were vials of malt powder, and when Dr. Brugh gave her the powder with a tongue depressor stick, it tasted like candy. Unruh reported that Dr. Brugh was very generous, many bills were not paid, and much money was owed to him when he died. Records at the County Court of Gage County revealed unpaid notes and accounts were estimated at \$3,500.

Taylor's mother was a quiet and sometimes reserved person, of a smaller build, about 5 feet 2 inches tall, 120 pounds in weight, fragile-appearing but underneath strong and occasionally demanding, and always concerned about her family. Ruth Brugh's attire was like that of a farm woman while in Beatrice, but after moving to Hollywood, it changed completely. She worked as a receptionist at the doctor's office, and was known to make the rounds with her husband when she had time. On occasion patients came to the home for treatment. To many Beatrice people, her dominant characteristic was her infirmity, and the general public perception was that "she enjoyed her illness." She was observed seated in a wheelchair downtown, and the doctor and Arlington escorted her to the Paddock Hotel on Sunday noons for dinner. In the winter of 1929-30, when Dr. Brugh became ill with tonsillitis, he and Ruth were quartered for part of the winter at the Paddock Hotel, an accommodation that lessened the housekeeping chores for them, since she was herself reported ill but improving.

Unruh stated that the Brugh house was spic and span, and there may have been help with that. Neighbors believed that Dr. Brugh did most of the laundry and much of the cooking at home, and that Arlington helped, too. Indeed, Ruth Brugh herself seemed to confirm this in her article

"Fate, Fame, and Robert Taylor" published in *Movie Classic* magazine in the months of September, October, and November 1936. She wrote 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." When her health was good, however, she did cook for the family, though Unruh noted, "Mrs. Brugh always seemed to be sick after the Jamisons were there for a meal." Stella Tyser Vlcek, a Wilber resident who is a sister of the late Rose Tyser Shimerda, who along with her husband Anthony were friends of the Brughs, had dinner at the Brugh home a few times. Vlcek recalled that while Ruth did not keep a garden, she did make chicken for dinner along with homemade food from scratch, and also baked her own white bread. In a 1957 interview published in the June 2 issue of the *Omaha World Herald Magazine*, Ruth Brugh stated that Arlington's favorite food when at home was Boston baked beans. In 1937, Hall quoted Taylor as saying, "I can remember still the warm, mixed odors of iodoform and hot corn bread and hot chocolate which were the mixed aromas of my dad's surgery and my mother's kitchen — the smell of home to me."

The mother and father had a relationship based on mutual love and respect, and family values were important. They were more quiet rather than talkative, recollected first cousin Earl Jamison, now a Beatrice resident. "They spent their evenings at home, and there were no quarrels." In 1937, Hall quoted Taylor as saying, they "conditioned my young idea of what marriage should be, of how a man should be with a woman. My father used to say to my mother, almost every day of his life, 'you are the most beautiful woman in the world to me. Every day we live together I love you more.'" As for young Arlington, his mother wrote in 1936 that "he was a thoughtful boy. He never forgot birthdays or anniversaries either...", and while "he was apt to be blunt and outspoken,... he would never come into the house that he would not kiss us both. He thought the world of his father, who also worshipped him."

Though the S.A. Brugh family did not spend much time with the Brugh relatives even before Arlington went to Hollywood, they were close to the Stanhopes, the mother's side of the family. They visited on occasion the A.L. Stanhope home in Filley and stayed from time to time at the Issac and Effie Stanhope Jamison farm located 1 mile east and 3 1/2 miles south of Ellis, a hamlet just 8 miles west of Beatrice. 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. In the history *Once Upon A Time, their hopes were high, Filley, Nebraska 1883-1983*, Perkey is quoted as saying, "One game we played on the dirt streets of Filley that they didn't play on the paved streets of Beatrice that Arlington really enjoyed was our arrow game. We secured green tree twigs, limber enough to spring an arrow. We tied a cord to one end of the twig and put a knot on the other end of the cord. We used wood roofing shingles to make arrows with a shaft and a notch to hold the knot. We pulled the twig back and let loose with its spring to see how far it would go and stick in the ground."

Earl Jamison reported that there was much hunting at the Jamison farm near Ellis, and he remembered that Arlington, his father, his grandfather Stanhope and his Uncle William Moore, husband of Ruth's sister Maplet, would hunt rabbits on Thanksgiving. Arlington used a .410 gauge shotgun, Earl at age ten used a 12 gauge, and grandfather used a 10 gauge. Then, too, the Jamison family went to the Brugh home every Christmas, where, cousin Eva Unruh recalled, their beloved "Uncle Spang would always have to leave to deliver a baby, but really returned as Santa, who knocked on the east window" of the home at 901 North 6th Street. In an interview, cousin Earl also remembered having lunch or supper at the cabin the Brughs used on the Anthony Shimerda farm

along the Big Blue River on the south edge of Beatrice along Beaver Avenue. It was there that Arlington, Earl, and Charles would play catch with a baseball and in the fall hunt squirrels. The adults in the families mainly engaged in conversation, and Earl stated, "Arlington was not argumentative when present with his elders, especially grandfather Stanhope, who was a tall man, about 6 feet 4 inches in height."

There was agreement between the father and mother on how Arlington should be handled, and they emphasized morals, respect for authority, responsible independence, and earning what one received. Many of the Brugh ancestors were affiliated with the German Baptist Church, and it is known that Taylor's grandfather Jacob A. Brugh was apparently affiliated with the Beatrice Church of the German Baptists (now called the Church of Brethren). It is located 4 miles east and 3 miles south of Beatrice in Rockford Township. According to Harold L. Kelley of Beatrice, a first cousin once removed to Taylor; "The Brugh side of the family was comprised of non-drinkers and non-smokers. They also did not use profane language." The Stanhopes were very religious; by one account, grandfather Stanhope was a strict Baptist, and "his wife Eva was a faithful Methodist, attending church regularly," stated Merna Jensen, a Filley resident and 1932 graduate of Filley High School. Unruh remembered that on Sundays the children played religious games such as baptism (a person stands on a stairs and dips someone down), and drinking alcohol was forbidden. Dr. and Mrs. Brugh along with Arlington regularly attended the Centenary Methodist Church at the northeast corner of 6th & Elk in Beatrice. Cyrus Hummer, a 1929 graduate of Beatrice High, remembered that he attended Sunday school at the Methodist Church in the same class as Arlington from about 1924 to 1928. Hal Ruyle was the teacher. "All the boys attended regularly but none was any more religious than any other," said Hummer.

The concept of respect for authority was taught in the home in basically a humane manner, and the parents therefore did not fear Arlington's being spoiled by their generosity. 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. But "along with those playthings went a lot of responsibilities," wrote Taylor in his autobiography published in the March 1, 1937 issue of the Lincoln *Nebraska State Journal*. "Father and mother were strict about that, and I don't ever remember being able to evade any punishments ... the notable thing about these spankings was not that there were many of them but their reliability. As sure as they were due I collected."

Ruth Brugh did write in 1936 about one instance of paddling. On a Saturday evening when the family decided to visit downtown Beatrice, the father warned young Arlington before they left home not to tease, but when downtown, he did tease the parents. So when they arrived home, the father administered the punishment. Usually, though, the father explained rather than scolded, for the mother commented that Arlington "was very sensitive — he still hates harsh criticism; both his father and I were that way." A.J. Myers, now an osteopath in Yakima, Washington, lived across the alley from the Brugh home during World War I. In a telephone interview on August 17, 1992, he remembered that once he and Arlington took Dr. Brugh's gunny sack of black walnuts, and threw them one by one into the garden, pretending to bomb the Germans. "Dr. Brugh's punishment was to make the two of us gather up all the walnuts and count them."

Early on, the development of responsible independence, resourcefulness, and the work ethic was fostered. Young Arlington had chores at home, such as keeping the wood organized and in the boxes for use in the furnace and fireplace. He also mowed the family lawn. In 1937, Hall quoted him as saying, "I cleaned and kept my own room in order. I did my own homework ... I understood that that was my job and that a man does his job alone." Perhaps a defining moment occurred in his life at the age of eleven when he decided to ride his pony Gypsy to the Stanhope

home in Filley over 12 miles away. After one hour, he telephoned his mother, complaining the pony would not obey. In 1936, Ruth wrote that she said, "Now, Arlington, just make the pony know you're the boss. Cut yourself a switch, and the first time she doesn't do what you tell her, use the switch." Arlington did just that, but the pony catapulted him into a ditch and ran off, leaving him to walk alone at dusk. Later, the pony returned, and they arrived at the home of the grandmother, who washed the blood and dirt off his face and hands. In the March 6, 1937 issue of the Lincoln *Nebraska State Journal*, he wrote, "As a result of this expedition, I had since shared a family opinion that I actually showed Gyp who was boss and that I'm really quite a fellow at handling horses and autos and such things."

He also wanted to do various jobs for money, and his parents encouraged him. The late Delores Harmon Drew, a 1934 graduate of Beatrice High, lived across the street from the Brughs when she was a child. She remembered that Arlington mowed the Harmon lawn with a push mower for about 24 cents an hour, and when he was a 9th grader, he would also beat the Harmons' rugs over a clothesline during the fall housecleaning. During this time, he also worked on a farm in the summer, shocking wheat. When 16 years old, he had a summer job painting cars, but the parents would not let him keep the job after school resumed. After graduation from high school, he had a summer job as an assistant bank teller, and mowed lawns after banking hours. During his senior year in high school, Arlington was given a 1929 Buick beige-and-orange-tinted, rumble seated sports coupe, something unusual for parents to have done in the 1920s. The mother wrote of that decision, "But we told him that 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."

In addition to inculcating the previously mentioned values, the mother and father were factors in Taylor's social development, including attitudes and interests, as were his experiences with other individuals and groups. During his childhood years, Arlington associated largely with adults. As mentioned before, his father took him to medical classes when the family returned to Kirksville, Missouri in February 1914, but a few months later after the Brughs moved to live with a farm couple outside of town, he did play with their little boy. In Fremont, after completing kindergarten in one semester, he was influenced by his mother to read at home.

After the family moved to Beatrice by September 1917, he was as a boy often in his father's office, and accompanied him on some of his rounds, even assisting once during an emergency procedure on an injured farmer. Taylor himself described one experience when a farmer's wife nearly died. After an all-night vigil by the doctor, the husband and children, Hall quoted Taylor in 1937 as saying, "It was pretty fine."

His contacts with his grandfather A.L. Stanhope, a man who "knew how many pieces of apple pie a fellow could eat," resulted in a great friendship. Perkey relayed several fond memories of A.L. Stanhope in his 1982 statement for the 1983 Filley history, asserting, "I admired Mr. Stanhope as a perfect example of physical fitness for a man in his seventies... As long as he lived, Mr. Stanhope walked through the snowdrifts with a coat, muffler, and overshoes, and as I watched, he went through our fields to his fur traps. He also maintained his vigor by cutting and sawing his own stove wood...When I was delivering milk on my route in town with my roller coaster wagon, I would often stop in the summer evenings and listen to Mr. Stanhope play his flute on the front porch. This fascinated me, and in the meantime, Mrs. Stanhope, a fine lady, offered me cookies to eat." Arlington loved his grandmother Eva Stanhope, a petite white-haired lady who belonged to the Ladies Aid Society of the Methodist Church in Filley, where she constantly talked about Arlington, it was reported. At his homecoming in Beatrice in 1936, Taylor was observed swooping up his precious grandmother who was waiting at the Paddock Hotel doorway, and carrying her

inside the Hotel. Of her, Perkey also commented, "I had another opportunity to enjoy Mrs. Stanhope's cooking when I participated in a pie eating contest at the Methodist Church picnic held in the Smith Grove. I had no trouble winning the contest by consuming her delicious Concord grape pie.... Another gourmet delicacy I also associated with the Stanhopes was young tender asparagus for the first time."

Other significant adults in Taylor's childhood were Anthony and Rose Tyser Shimerda, a farm couple of Czech descent who from 1907 to 1924 owned a 160-acre farm in Sections 2 & 3 of Riverside Township on the south side of Beatrice adjacent to the Big Blue River and Chautauqua Park. The Brughs got together socially with the Shimerdas perhaps monthly from 1918 to 1924, the year the Shimerdas moved to Wilber, after which the two families continued to visit with each other. Meanwhile, the Brughs made social visits to the farm along Beaver Avenue, which was taken over by Mrs. Shimerda's brother Robert Tyser and his wife Flossie.

The two families had become acquainted after Mrs. Shimerda contracted influenza during the infamous 1918 worldwide epidemic of Spanish flu. She went to Dr. Brugh for treatment, and followed his recommendation that she and her husband spend the following summer in a tent in Colorado for health reasons.

The Shimerdas raised corn and wheat, farmed with horses, and cared for a sizable orchard in the early years, selling apples, cherries, grapes, peaches and plums to the nearby Thompson Store, a grocery located along the railroad tracks toward the city. They also raised their own poultry, hogs, and cattle and butchered by themselves. Wood made from the timber along the river was used for the wood-burning oval stove and cook stove, and having no electricity, they used kerosene lamps. In many ways the Shimerdas lived like most farmers during the 1920s.

A skilled homemaker, Mrs. Shimerda cared for their poultry, and always had a large garden, canning dill and sweet pickles, pickled beet, green beans, corn and pork. She made typical Czech food, with roast chicken, duck, pork, and beef, and homemade sauerkraut in the winter and sweet-sour cabbage in the summer. Lard was used for everything, and she made rye bread and pastries, such as apple pie, crescent rolls, cinnamon rolls, donuts and kolaches. In the winter there was homemade hand-cranked ice cream. The Shimerda house, which still stands today at 1320 Beaver Avenue, is presently owned by Robert Tyser's children – Arlington Tyser (who was named after Arlington Brugh) of Beatrice and Glennys Tyser Ziegler of Crete. There were roses, hollyhocks, and purple lilacs, and the family raised horses and kept a brown-and-white shepherd dog.

In 1919 or 1920, when Arlington was eight years old, the Brughs bought and kept his pony "Gypsy" at the Shimerda farm, and he could ride it in the pasture anytime year around. He came to the farm alone, usually on a bicycle, and continued riding his pony through his high school years when the farm was under the ownership of the Robert Tyser family. In 1936, his mother wrote that "he always said that he was going to have a big ranch and be a cowboy." Taylor himself commented in his March 1, 1937 article that his father "had always been amused at my childhood admiration for cowboy film actors and at my efforts to imitate them on the pony he bought me when I was a Boy Scout."

Also about 1920 the Shimerdas constructed on their farm a cabin about a quarter of a mile from the Big Blue River. Its interior had two bedrooms, a small kitchen, a living room, and a wood-burning stove. The Brughs stayed in it each summer perhaps two weekends a month, Stella Tyser Vlcek reported, and they had meals with the Shimerdas at other times of the year until 1924 when the cabin was moved to near the farmhouse and used as a wash-house.

While at the cabin, Dr. Brugh, Arlington and Anthony Shimerda went pole fishing for

catfish in the Big Blue, the men skinned the fish, and Mrs. Shimerda did the cooking. In the winter the men hunted for rabbits, skinned them, and Mrs. Shimerda cooked the meat and served dumplings with prune rabbit gravy.

When the Brughs visited the Shimerdas at the farmhouse, they had dinner and conversation, though each August they would walk to nearby Chautauqua Park and enjoy the cultural activities. According to Vlcek, who was present at a few of these meals, Mrs. Shimerda would often serve chicken and dumplings, a favorite of Dr. Brugh and Arlington, and sometimes there would be roast duck, pork or beef, a typical Czech meal with all the trimmings. Mrs. Brugh drank coffee, Arlington milk.

Vlcek also remembered, "Dr. Brugh would dress in trousers with a white or blue shirt, but no tie. He would talk about college, his home farm near Rockford, and laugh a lot. Occasionally he would talk about his brother LeRoy, who stayed on a farm, and how he himself left the farm to become a grain dealer and then a doctor." Glennys Tyser Ziegler, now a Crete resident, was present as a young girl at one dinner her parents Robert and Flossie Tyser made for the Brughs about 1932, and recalled, "Dr. Brugh loved fried chicken, and there was much laughter at the table."

After the dinners, the women washed the dishes, and there was more conversation. Vlcek noted, "Young Arlington basically listened, smiled a lot, and laughed at the jokes. He took after his dad because of the hunting and fishing, and his idea of getting ahead. Dr. Brugh had to work to put himself through college, and Arlington was like him. He learned work habits from his dad."

Beatrice and Taylor's elementary school experiences

Taylor's social development was also likely affected by the community of Beatrice and the various events that occurred at the time he lived there. Named on July 4, 1857 after Julia Beatrice Kinney, the eldest daughter of a Nebraska City judge, it had by 1930 a population of 10,291 and was the 8th largest city in Nebraska that year. The city was served by four bus lines, by three railroads with 27 daily trains, and was located at the intersection of two graveled transcontinental highways (today paved U.S. Highways 77 and 136).

It was third in per capita wealth in the United States, according to the June 3, 1930 issue of the *Beatrice Daily Sun*. While the city and Gage County led the entire state of Nebraska in dairy and agriculture, the community also had 30 factories and industries that employed over 1,100 persons and had an annual payroll of over \$2,500,000. There were also some 150 small businesses, all of which helped make Beatrice the trade center for the southeastern section of Nebraska and the northern area of Kansas.

The largest company at the time was the Dempster Mill Manufacturing Company, a firm that supplied the nation and the world with farm machinery, gas engines, well supplies, and windmills. There were also Store Kraft Manufacturing, a company that made special store fixtures and distributed them nationwide, and Swift & Company, one of three such large plants devoted to poultry and produce.

In 1920, the Beatrice Public Library, a Carnegie Library located at 218 North 5th Street and now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was the 4th largest out of 118 tax supported libraries in Nebraska. It had 11,855 volumes and a circulation of 36,512, but by 1930 it had become the 3rd largest in the state. Also in 1930, its public school system housed 2,305 pupils in ten buildings, and the Catholic and Lutheran parochial schools combined had an enrollment of 188 pupils. The community had 20 churches with a total membership of 6,000 persons and three hospitals with a 175-bed capacity. It was also the site of a state institution housing some 900 young patients who had mental deficiencies. Today it is known as the Beatrice State Developmental

Center.

At the time, Beatrice was also a community that attracted thousands of visitors for a variety of cultural events, many of them at Chautauqua Park along the Big Blue River. From 1889 to 1910, it was the site of the renowned Chautauqua, an annual assembly of nationally-known speakers, musicians, preachers and travelers. Eventually the park expanded to 50 acres and became the site of tennis courts, summer picnics, family reunions, religious gatherings, and band concerts. In the 1920s, the Chautauqua was revived and held each August until 1927. Today the Chautauqua tabernacle first used in 1889 is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and Chautauquas are organized to entertain the public and are held annually in conjunction with Homestead Days. Another tourist attraction for many years was the Venetian Festival of floats on the Big Blue River. It was held annually until 1927, and some years drew as many as 20,000 onlookers.

Another popular event for many was the Gage County Fair, located at Beatrice since 1872. In the summer of 1925, Riverside Park, an amusement park on the northwest edge of the city, was newly opened, with a picnic area, swimming pool and dance pavilion. It successfully competed with Fink's Park, a similar amusement area near Wymore, a town just 13 miles south of Beatrice. Opened in 1923, Fink's Park attracted many Beatrice youth.

The Paddock Opera House, located at the northwest corner of 6th & Court, was a center for entertainment as well as a hotel after it first opened in 1889. Named after Algernon S. Paddock, a Beatrice resident who served two terms as a U.S. Senator representing Nebraska, the original structure burned down on August 1, 1919. After an extensive fundraising campaign in which Dr. Brugh was a \$100 donor, the Paddock Hotel was rebuilt for approximately \$430,000 provided by some 800 home shareholders. It re-opened on January 14, 1924, and was a five-story building with 105 rooms. At the present time, it has been renamed the Paddock Kensington, and remodeled into an independent living center for senior citizens.

Beatrice also had a tradition of supporting formal education. Northwestern Business College, after being open continuously for 35 years, closed in the fall of 1923. Then the community was seriously considered for relocation of Doane College from Crete to Beatrice. But when the city could not raise the proposed \$2 million, the trustees of Doane College in early 1927 decided to keep it in Crete. Dr. Brugh was a \$100 donor for this project, too.

A major event that affected everyone in the Beatrice area in 1917, the year the Brugh family arrived from Fremont, was World War I. It was an uncomfortable time for German-Americans nationwide, and it was no different in Gage County, where they were the dominant ethnic group. The nationwide treatment of the ethnic group is ably described by Frederick C. Luebke, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln historian, in his book *Bonds of Loyalty* (Illinois University Press, 1974), and it is clear that patriotism was defined by the concept of "one country, one language, one flag."

Throughout the war, the Beatrice newspapers carried various accounts of the regulation and harassment on the national, state and local levels. In April 1918, Nebraska passed a law that limited the teaching of foreign language in the schools of the state, and by the end of that school year, Beatrice High had dropped the German language from its curriculum. That same year a minister in Gage County was publicly charged at a meeting in Wymore with having written a seditious article in the *Chicago Examiner* the previous summer. And the publisher of the local German weekly *Die Nebraska Post*, which was circulated for nearly 25 years in Gage County, was pressured into switching to the English language. On occasion, names of people who had not contributed to Red Cross and liberty loan drives were published. And there were reports of yellow paint being used on stores and private property of people adjacent to Gage County, though an April

11, 1918 editorial in the *Beatrice Daily Sun* discouraged that kind of behavior.

There is no evidence that the Brugh family was directly victimized for its ethnicity at this time, though they certainly had to endure the climate of the era. Dr. Brugh was well respected and liked in the community, and according to former neighbor Ed Bede Jr., the Brughs often displayed the American flag on the front porch of their home at 901 North 6th in the late 1920s. Robert Taylor's patriotism became visible in the 1940s when he served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947. An editorial about Taylor's views published in the October 24, 1947 issue of the *Omaha World Herald* concluded, "It is good to hear a young American, uncontaminated by the graceless 'isms' of the day, speak, as an American, to Americans, for America."

Concurrent with World War I was another event of worldwide proportions — the Spanish flu epidemic in the fall and winter of 1918-19. The third worst pandemic in history, after the plagues of the 6th and 14th centuries, it accounted for some 21 million deaths worldwide, including just over 548,000 in the United States. Many deaths were caused not only by the flu itself but also when it developed into pneumonia. In Nebraska, for example, where a statewide quarantine existed from October 26 to November 2, statistics from the Nebraska State Department of Health for 1918 reveal that out of 15,637 deaths that year, there were 1,043 caused by the flu and 4,175 by pneumonia. These flu-related deaths outnumbered those of other causes such as 867 by cancer, 80 by car accident, and 58 by drowning, though data can be misleading when compared to present-day statistics, since age 45 was the average life expectancy in 1918.

Exact data for the prevalence of the Spanish flu in Gage County from October to December 1918 is not available, but newspaper accounts reveal churches, schools, theaters and several businesses and organizations in Beatrice were closed at varying times. In October there were over 90 cases reported each week, and the December 22, 1918 issue of the *Beatrice Daily Sun* indicated over 200 cases and 21 deaths were recorded in one week in the month of December. According to A.J. Myers, a neighbor of the Brughs at the time, medical doctors were skeptical of osteopaths' abilities. But some time after the epidemic ended, Myers' father, a medical doctor in Beatrice, stated at the dinner table to his family, "That S.O.B. (Dr. Brugh) across the alley never lost a patient during the World War I flu epidemic."

It is not certain if young Arlington contracted the Spanish flu, but it is likely, for his mother did write in 1936 that while he had good health except for measles at the age of ten and flu once or twice, he did cause much worry one time. "That was when he got up and answered the telephone while he had the flu, and had a setback. Most of the people who died during these flu epidemics were the ones who did crazy things. For weeks his father and I never knew what it was to go to bed and get a good night's rest. We almost lost him." Former neighbor on High Street, Mrs. St. John recalled that when Dr. Brugh treated her sister Grace in the early 1920s for an injured larynx, he stated that Arlington as a child had a bronchitis spot on one lung.

The community of Beatrice did offer Taylor the chance to expand his joy for the outdoors beyond what he gained from his parents, the Stanhope relatives, and the Shimerda and Tyser families. He was, for example, a member of the Boy Scouts of America. And in his March 1, 1937 article, he informed the readers that "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." His mother also wrote that he swam at the YMCA, took long bicycle rides, and went horseback riding. Indeed, as former riding companion Fred Pemberton, a 1932 graduate of Beatrice High, recalled, "Arlington was an excellent horseman, and the two of us rode horses together north of town for nearly three hours about twice a week for six months or so." And Cyrus Hummer, a schoolmate

and 1929 Beatrice High graduate, stated, "Arlington worked out with the high school track team, and even wanted to play football, but his mother objected because she feared he might hurt his fingers for playing the cello." Then, too, as described earlier, nearly all of his part-time jobs through his years in Beatrice involved outdoor work.

At the time Taylor began the first grade in the fall of 1917, after completing kindergarten in Fremont the previous year, the Beatrice Public Schools had eight elementary schools (grades 1-8) and one high school (grades 9-12), with a total enrollment of 2,023 for the 1918-19 school year. According to the February 6, 1921 *Beatrice Daily Sun*, the school system ranked 6th in the state in pupils per teacher and 4th in average teacher's salary. On June 9th of the same year it was reported that attendance figures were impressive for each school, and on November 10th it was announced that Beatrice High had improved its English program by encouraging good speech through a variety of activities. By the fall of 1922, a cinder track was added to Athletic Park.

In the winter and spring of 1923, an art exhibit under school auspices was held at the YMCA and a local parent-teacher association was formed. A vocational guidance program was also endorsed. The East Elementary School orchestra under the direction of B. P. Osborn, a music supervisor at Beatrice High, performed at a community sing at the First Congregational Church, and petitions were prepared for a \$400,000 bond issue for a new junior high and other structures. And the Beatrice Public Library, a Carnegie Library, opened in 1904 and located across the street from Beatrice High, was rated third best in the state in terms of size, equipment, patron usage, and general circulation. It was the library for the schools, too.

In the summer of 1923, electric lights were installed in every room at the high school as well as a shower bath for the girls and drinking fountains. A year later, all of the elementary schools had central heating, electricity, and modern conveniences. In November 1923, the 4th & 5th graders at Central Elementary gave an exhibition of music appreciation by listening to musical exercises played on a phonograph and repeating them. In the fall of 1925, the new junior high complete with a large auditorium opened at the site of the old Central Elementary School, whose pupils were moved to the first floor of the Junior High. For the 1928-29 school year, the Beatrice Public Schools had an enrollment of 2,234, an increase of just over 200 since the 1918-19 school year.

Taylor's school years naturally afforded opportunities for socialization with his peers and for intellectual growth, though his character traits and his parents remained dominant factors. He enrolled in the first grade in the fall of 1917 at Fairview Elementary School located at 13th & Summit. In his letter of March 24, 1948 to his cousin Nelda Brugh, then a fifth grade pupil at Fairview, Taylor recalled that he attended there one semester or so, and called it "a very wonderful school at the time." He also remembered that his teacher was Mrs. Hortense Saxton. Even then his handsome features were evident. Arlington had blue eyes, pink cheeks, and very dark brown hair (later off-black) that was heavy and wavy. He also was distinguished by his widow's peak. His mother dressed him in Lord Fauntleroy suits, that is, short black velvet trousers and a white silk blouse, attire he wore through the 6th grade, recollected Mrs. St. John. Taylor reported that he was sometimes nicknamed "Buddy" but friends and relatives often used "Arly", a shortened version of Arlington, his middle name.

Of his early school experiences, Taylor was quoted by Hall in 1937 as reporting, "I was almost always alone. I went to school. I was a good little boy, I am afraid. I liked school. I did well in my lessons and liked them. I never played hooky. I never was sent to "see the Principal". I got on with the boys and girls in my classes. I was usually the room monitor and the president of the class or whatever that office is called in the grades. I played baseball on the school playground in

the baseball season and football in the football season. I roller-skated and played jacks and marbles and hopscotch and all the games of the moment. I usually ate my lunches in the little town cafe or went home for lunch."

But he also suffered from peer pressure. Biographer Wayne wrote that he was ridiculed and classmates ran after him in their desire to dirty his clothes. According to Esther Heffelfinger Dockhorn, a 1927 Beatrice High graduate and now a resident of Greeley, Colorado, "people in grade school would refer to Arlington as 'little Lord Fauntleroy' in jest because of his immaculate dress. This was especially true of people in the north part of town in the Fairview area." And St. John commented, "Because he was considered a sissy by the kids, his teachers could have appointed him monitor of his class in grade school as a way of helping him." In his March 1, 1937 article, Taylor expressed his dislike for his name given to him by his mother, and wrote, "But I've forgiven her for that and for those Lord Fauntleroy suits I once had to wear." At the time his mother apparently did not know of his hatred for his attire, for "he never found fault with the way we dressed him," she wrote in 1936.

It is not clear how long he attended Fairview Elementary School or when he entered Central Elementary at the corner of 6th & Elk Streets. But when the Brughs lived at 812 High Street from 1921 to 1924, St. John knew Arlington when he was in the 6th & 7th grades and she was in the 3rd & 4th grades. Central School was just four blocks away. St. John recalled that Mrs. Brugh used to dress him in short black velvet pants, a white shirt, and a huge straw hat, and Arlington sat on the porch at home but wasn't permitted to play with the neighborhood kids after school and on weekends. "The neighborhood kids made fun of Arly because he couldn't come off the porch and play with them," St. John said. And if the kids went to the Brughs' yard, "Mrs. Brugh asked them to go back to their own yard. She didn't want them playing with Arly." In the summers, there were no clubs to attend, or playgrounds other than those adjacent to the schools, so Arlington sat on the top step of the porch, probably read and entertained himself, and the only person he talked to was his mother.

Taylor's recollections of his childhood bear out his shy and serious traits. He was quoted by Hall in 1937 as reporting, "After school I didn't play with the other kids. I liked to be alone by myself. And I was alone. I never ran with a group... I wasn't unhappy. On the contrary, I read a lot. Not literature, I fear....No, I read all the boys' books there were. The Henty books and the Alger books and books of adventure. I didn't read poetry. I wasn't at all the dreamy sort. I had my horse. I had my bike. I always had a flock of animals to care for. I just had enough to do on my own and that's how I preferred to do and be." St. John was of the opinion that his shyness might have been related to the time he had to sit on the porch. And she remembered Mrs. Brugh "as overly protective of Arlington, who was always with her when going downtown or to church. Although she was of slight build and took good care of herself, there were few visitors to the house." On one July 4th, however, the Brughs with Arlington did go to the Barger residence to watch the fireworks (usually Roman candles) which Mr. Barger had purchased for the enjoyment of neighborhood children. In 1936, Mrs. Brugh took another perspective when she wrote that Arlington "was naturally a high-strung child. If we had not known how to handle him, he could easily have become a problem. He was very sensitive. If anyone spoke harshly to him about some little thing he had done, he would not be able to eat or sleep." She also wrote that often "he would not be able to eat if he had done something that he regretted—and discouragements used to upset him terribly." 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. Taylor was fond of a passage from British writer Hugh S. Walpole's 1913

novel *Fortitude*, which was taught to him at about 10 years of age by his father. In Kitty Callahan's article "Robert Taylor" published in the July 23, 1943 issue of *The Family Circle* magazine, he was quoted as remembering it as a credo of sorts: "Blessed be all sorrows, torments, hardships, endurances that demand courage. Blessed be these things, for of these things cometh the making of a man. Make of me a man, to be afraid of nothing, to be ready for everything — love, friendship and success. To take it if it comes — to care nothing if these things are not for me. Make me brave." And in 1937 Hall quoted him as saying, "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."

Academics, activities, and friendships in the secondary school years

During his junior high years, Taylor benefited from school activities, was a fine student, and formed friendships. After he became involved in music under the direction of Beatrice Public Schools music supervisor B.P. Osborn, he became a member of a quartet of gifted students comprised of Don Abbott, on trumpet, Herbert Jackson, clarinet, Gerhart D. Wiebe, violin, and himself on cello. His music activity, which became an important step in his eventual acting career, enabled him to form a friendship with Wiebe, who lived at 609 Grant and whose father William owned the Wiebe Dry Goods Store located at 501 Court. Of this relationship, Hall quoted Taylor in 1937 as saying, "When I was in the eighth grade, I made my first and only real friend — Garry Wiebe. Garry's folks kept a dry goods emporium in Beatrice. We used to hang around there a lot. Sometimes Garry's dad let us get behind a counter and play mailman. I liked that. I thought I'd have a store some day." They were close friends through high school and at Doane College, where Wiebe graduated in 1933, and later went on to distinguish himself. After earning his doctorate at Ohio State University, he served as a clinical psychologist in World War II, then worked in New York City for the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). For a time he was personal assistant to its president Frank Stanton, according to the July 15, 1955 *Beatrice Daily Sun*. From 1962 until his retirement, Wiebe was Dean of the School of Public Communication at Boston University. In 1988, he died in Escazu, Costa Rica.

"Arlington was considered effeminate until high school because the boys were jealous of his good looks and he didn't participate in sports," according to Paul Drew, a school friend of Taylor's, and 1928 Beatrice High graduate. Arlington's popularity had grown sufficiently by the 9th grade for him to be the first elected student body president of Beatrice Junior High, which had been newly opened in the fall of 1925. Its large auditorium with a seating capacity of 1256 was used for various activities of the entire school system, and Arlington's leadership position gave him valuable experience in facing an audience. Later in his life, in his September 5, 1966 letter to Beatrice publisher Robert Marvin, he wrote, "I shall never forget the fears that overcame me every time I had to preside over a 'meeting' in that auditorium or introduce guest speakers. Nothing since has ever frightened me as much." His classroom performance during the 9th grade resulted in excellent grades in every instance except Latin, a one-year course in which he struggled to earn average grades. For the remainder of his coursework, however, he received the equivalent of A's and B's, and his course selection revealed diversity. Arlington enrolled for the entire year in English, Algebra, Industrial Arts and Physical Education, the latter being ungraded. He also enrolled for one semester in Music, Oral English and General Science. His interest in music will be described in more depth in a later section, but it is clear that he took school seriously at this stage, and made an effort to develop what educators term "a well-rounded personality."

Also about this time Taylor's first serious romance occurred, according to his mother, who

wrote in 1936 that he had "crushes" on girls and rarely spoke of them, but "the only girl I ever knew for sure that he was excited about was a little girl named Helen Rush." This happened just before high school. Taylor himself wrote in his March 9, 1937 article in the Lincoln *Nebraska State Journal* that "I was over heels in love with Helen Rush," who, observed St. John, was "short, happy, had light brown hair and a big smile. The world was right with Helen." Her father was Dr. Weaver A. Rush, a radiologist whose office was in the Arcade Building at the southeast corner of 6th and Court.

During his senior high years, Taylor increased his participation in school activities, was an excellent student, gained a few more friends, especially females, and achieved a measure of popularity. His music and drama interests are described after this section on social development, but he was involved in other ways, too. A beneficial activity, likely gained at first as a result of volunteering, was his role as presenter or master of ceremonies for a variety of school functions. As a sophomore, he was involved in this capacity in an amusing incident. When the famed German opera and concert singer Ernestine Schumann-Heink toured the United States in the mid-1920s, she was invited to perform at an evening concert at the Junior High Auditorium in May 1927. According to the late Robert S. Marvin, a schoolmate and 1931 Beatrice High graduate as well as publisher later of the local newspaper, on the day of her performance, some people at the high school referred to her as "human shank." So Arlington, when introducing her at the concert, erroneously stated, "I'm happy to present to you Madam Human Shank."

As a junior, he was elected as president of the Junior Class, and was in charge of toasts at the annual Beatrice High Junior-Senior Banquet held on May 8, 1928 at the Paddock Hotel. And at the Senior High chapel exercises, he presented to the school the string quartet contest cup. His school friend Paul Drew also recalled that Arlington was in debate that year, and did well in local competition but was not on the varsity debate team. Drew was not in any academic class with him, but recalled "he was very intelligent in debate." Arlington also participated that year (and his senior year) in an informal activity known as the Junior/Senior Olympics, an organized ritual among the boys on the football field after school in late spring. It involved the juniors forming a circle around the seniors, selecting an opponent, then wrestling their opposite, but with no real hostility. The July 21, 1957 *Beatrice Daily Sun* reported that he gained fame in school with his athletic ability in this ritual, and quoted a teacher who anonymously stated, "Arlington did not pick someone his own size. Instead, he took on the biggest boy in the senior class, an all-state athlete who weighed a good 50 pounds more than he did." Dressed in a close-fitting turtle-neck sweater and clean, pressed pants, the slender Arlington "not only threw him, but sat on his chest. When the afternoon was over, though his slacks were torn, you know he came out of those fights looking almost as well as he went in." His ability in athletics was also shown, however briefly, in his participation in track. Robert Connett, a 1935 graduate of Wymore High, asserted that "Arly was a hurdler at Beatrice High, but the mother did not want him to continue because he might injure his face." Many years later, in one scene in the 1938 MGM movie *A Yank At Oxford*, Taylor demonstrated his prowess as a hurdler.

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 May 16, 1929 Beatrice Senior High Convocation, various awards were presented, including gold medals to Arlington as well as Joe Miller and Gerhart Wiebe. On May 29th, the 50th Commencement of Beatrice High School was held, with 112 seniors awarded diplomas. Arlington was introduced as one of the three gold medal finalists, and he was among the ten members of the Beatrice High School Chapter of the National

Honor Society. Of interest is the commencement address delivered by Lincoln Pastor Paul C. Calhoun — its title was "Turn Faces to the Future." Two key statements in his address were as follows: "Guard against becoming stuck in the past" and "It is up to you to determine whether you will be masters or slaves to change."

His classroom work throughout the three years at Beatrice Senior High was excellent, especially when one considers Arlington was enrolled in a college preparatory program. His coursework included a semester of algebra and civics, a year of biology, two years of English and history, a year of geometry and three years of French, with the remainder of the courses involving boys glee, drama, orchestra and string quartet. He also took two semesters of gym and three of typing for credit, as grades were not assigned in these courses. Out of a total of 28 graded courses in three years, Arlington earned twelve B's and sixteen A's, and while his class rank cannot be verified in any official school records, Mrs. Brugh wrote that he finished second out of the 112 graduating members of the Class of 1929. Thus it was most fitting to have published alongside his photograph in the 1929 *Homesteader* the motto: "Few things are impossible to diligence and perseverance."

Though Arlington had several casual friends in school, his after-school friends most often came from musical groups, most notably classmate and best pal Gerhart D. Wiebe and Clyde Pfaff, the latter a member of the Class of 1928. Both were accomplished violinists, and after graduation Pfaff for a time was a violin tutor at Wilber and other towns in the area. They and Arlington were members of the community-based Lenhart's Orchestra, which held practices each Sunday at the Barger residence. St. John, a participant in this orchestra, recollected that Wiebe was a nice person, shy, helpful, and sociable, and he attended the Mennonite Church four miles northwest of the city. Pfaff, on the other hand, was withdrawn, quiet, and wore long hair, about shoulder length. They wore sport-jackets and contrasting trousers, and St. John remembered, "Arlington was always well groomed, but he was remote and didn't associate with people. He never wanted his appearance to be out of place, or to make a mistake, and never really relaxed with his peers." Pfaff seemed morose, and didn't enter into any discussion, she reported, and the happiest time of his life was when he played music. "Wiebe was the leader of the three boys," asserted St. John.

Acquaintances from Arlington's high school days recall he was always so handsome, and had pink cheeks throughout his school years. He was also always immaculately dressed in slacks, sweaters, and wore silk clothes. And according to his mother, friends and relatives often spoke about his beauty. Yet she was quoted by Hall in 1937 as reporting, "But we cared more about what went on inside of him than about the way he looked. His looks were well enough. It was his mind and his soul we were concerned with. The kind of man he would be, not look, his character, not his charm." Some of his other traits reveal he had a complex nature. A friend of the Brugh family, Marvin noted what many others observed: "Taylor was a private person, not out-going, not very talkative." And Taylor himself admitted to insecurity when Hall quoted him as saying, "I've never expected people to like me. I've always taken it for granted that they won't. I can't make advances. I don't mix easily," a statement confirmed by his mother who wrote in 1936 that "he was always a little too backward; he still is." He could also be generous, a trait reported by Robert Drew, now a Beatrice resident and a 1932 Beatrice High graduate who participated in a talent show at a luncheon sponsored by the Beatrice Chamber of Commerce. Among the six contestants were seniors Gerhart Wiebe and Arlington. Said Drew, "I played my harmonica and placed first! One of the first to congratulate me was Arlington Brugh."

Despite or because of his immense success, his looks, and his popularity, Arlington had to endure some resentment even in high school. According to the March 5, 1929 *Beatrice Daily Sun*,

someone stole a spare tire from his car while he was attending a rehearsal of the operetta at the Junior High Auditorium the previous evening. The culprit was never apprehended. The term "pretty boy" was occasionally used by some, reported Pemberton, though perhaps not directly to him. Marvin stated that "one of Arlington's nicknames in jest and sometimes in print was 'Home Brugh,' or more literally 'home brew'." According to Paul Drew, Arlington was addressed as "Arly." A nickname that Arlington himself adopted in high school developed because of his childhood career preference. As first cousin Earl Jamison recalled, "Arly talked about being a doctor when we were kids," and so, as Paul Drew remembered, "Arlington was sometimes called 'Doc'," a term Arlington used when he attended Doane College.

Taylor's female friendships in high school

His female friendships increased, as might be expected, and his popularity with them was noted during his junior year in the 1928 *Homesteader*. Under his photo toward the back of the annual was the caption "One At A Time, Girls." Whether or not this editorial judgment was accurate may never be known, but some questions of interest do arise. What were his dating habits in high school? Who were the girls he dated? And what, if anything, did they say about him?

His dating habits in high school were, of course, affected somewhat by the attitudes, customs, and moral values of the community at the time, including his own family. Nationwide the 1920s was termed the "jazz age" and the era of the "flapper." Beatrice remained conservative, with, as stated previously, over half the population affiliated with the city's 20 churches, several of which frowned not only on alcohol but also dancing on Sunday or any other day of the week. It was a city in which movie theaters were closed on Sunday until a city-wide vote in April 1940 allowed them to open seven days a week. The majority of the adults also expected conformity to the mores of the community, and reacted when transgressions occurred. For example, an 8 p.m. curfew for all young people under the age of 16 was announced in the October 12, 1923 *Beatrice Daily Sun*. It was the result of complaints of parked cars of boys and girls of high school age late at night in isolated sections or outlying areas of the city. And a letter to the editor published on August 14, 1928 complained about the "reckless disregard for all modesty in Beatrice" and "several young ladies (sic) parading our streets bare-legged and with just enough clothes to successfully cover their equator. Must I compel my wife and children to stand before such an exhibition with a mixed multitude, to most of whom it suggests but the grossest sensuality?"

Opportunities for mixing between the sexes existed at church gatherings, family functions, movie theaters, and school. But Beatrice High, like most Nebraska high schools at the time, did not offer such opportunities on campus beyond the normal classroom and school organization activities, and in fact there was segregation at school entrances, with the girls entering from the south side and the boys from the east. Students who wanted to dance would go to those held at the Parish Hall of Christ Episcopal Church and to the newly opened Riverside Park in the northwest section of the city. They also went dancing at Fink's Park near Wymore and Horky's Park near Crete, according to St. John. Students would go after dances or the movies or school functions to their favorite "hangouts" which included Owl Pharmacy and Penner's Pharmacy, the latter of which after 1924 employed Charlie Scott, a "soda jerk" with a great sense of humor. Of him, Marvin recalled that "Charlie made the best chili I ever ate," and Taylor, who in October 1936 was photographed with Scott at Penner's soda fountain in the Arcade Building, remembered Scott "fed him sodas and cokes from the time he could see over the counter."

"It was typical of Beatrice boys to start dating as a junior in high school," said Paul Drew, "and Arlington played the 'field' as a junior and senior in high school." Within two or three dates,

the girls permitted kissing in the car (then called necking). There was also an understanding that the girls would be taken home by 11 p.m. Drew also remembered that dating a girl for six or seven times (once a week) at Beatrice High meant it was serious. But "a 'nice' girl had to be very discreet with the boy, and he had to make the first advance, for the girl, if she was 'nice', would not be forward. If a girl had 'loose' morals, she was considered to have 'round heels.'" While it cannot be determined with certainty, Drew's educated guess was that "Taylor, like a few of the boys, probably had his first sexual experience while in high school."

Movie-going was a popular activity on dates, as was dancing for some, though Hummer recalled, "The boys who danced were considered sissies by many of the boys." Drew stated that "any Beatrice girl dated was taken to an ice cream parlor called Davison's on the main floor of the YMCA on Court Street and also to Penner's Pharmacy." He also noted that he took girls to the open air dances at Riverside Park in 1930 and 1931 when the famous band of Lawrence Welk's played there. Then, too, there were Beatrice boys who traveled to Wymore to meet girls at the Methodist Church on Sunday evenings. After the youth meeting, which was under the charge of a teacher or minister, the boys would give the girls a car ride, and sometimes take them dancing at the open air dance at Fink's Park near the town. Drew also revealed that "Arlington and I dated Charlotte Martin, a farmer's daughter of rural Blue Springs, during the summer and fall of 1929. He and I dated her about two or three times each. A brunette with blue eyes, she was 5 feet 4 inches tall, cute, quiet, intelligent, well read, and a nice person. I drove her around and we had soda pop." According to Drew, another Wymore area girl dated by Arlington was Jean Feese, a 1930 graduate of Wymore High School. Her father was a dentist.

Taylor had several dates in high school, and in a 1936 interview he stated that he liked to dance very much. His mother wrote that he learned how to dance at the age of sixteen at the Casino at Lake Okoboji, Iowa, where she and her husband spent three consecutive summers vacationing in a cottage, and Arlington would join them at summer's end. In his May 20, 1967 letter to the Arvid Eyths, Taylor commented, "I'm not sure that I can even hear the music anymore — let alone keep time and generate enough power to propel myself around a floor. Remember the outdoor dance hall we used to have out at Riverside Park?" According to Earl Jamison, "Arlington's parents let him attend dances during his high school years, but they wouldn't allow him to go with the wrong crowd or drink alcohol, something that grandmother Stanhope, a strong Methodist, was against."

As described previously, the first romance of Taylor's life was with Helen Rush in the 9th grade, and it may have lasted into the senior high years. A high school friendship that meant much to him involved Catherine "Kate" Heffelfinger, also a 1929 graduate. In his March 9, 1937 article, he wrote that Kate was "a tiny, pretty girl I used to take out," and they remained friends long after she married classmate Edgar Weekes Jr., also one of Arlington's best friends. About 5 feet 2 inches tall, with black hair and blue eyes, Kate was, remembered St. John, "an assertive, outgoing girl who liked a good time, and had many friends." This was confirmed by Kate's sister Esther Heffelfinger Dockhorn, a valedictorian of her Class of 1927, who also stated that Kate, or "Kay", liked to sew and was a decorator. The Heffelfingers lived at 1423 Grant Street at the time, and Dockhorn recalled that Arlington dated Kate a few times during their junior year. "Kate and Arlington were considered part of the 500 Group, the more socially prominent people in high school at the time. He was a quiet fellow, even on Student Council, had a creamy white face, rosy cheeks, and medium brown, wavy hair," she said, and he was "much better looking in person than he is on the screen." The parents of Kate were solid citizens, and the father was co-owner of Heffelfinger Meatmarket located at 625 Court..

Esther Legate Aller, a 1928 graduate and life-long resident of Beatrice, dated Arlington in

the fall and winter of 1928-29 when they were both in the community play "Aunt Lucia" October 25-26. About 5 feet 4 inches tall with dark brown hair and blue eyes, Esther was originally attracted to him when he played in the high school orchestra during assembly programs. He would sometimes look at her in the audience but they never had conversations. In the fall of 1928, he phoned Esther for a dinner date at Winner's Cafe in the town of Odell on a Sunday noon. They drove in his "sporty" car, and Dr. and Mrs. Brugh in theirs. They sat at a table separate from the parents, and talked a lot, but not about politics or sports, and never his mother or father.

He then took her dancing several Saturday evenings to the Elks Club in adjacent Fairbury, where they did the popular dances of the time, including the fox trot and the waltz. "Once we were caught in a snowstorm on the way back from Fairbury, and we stopped in a farmyard and stayed a while until we could move on. Arly tried to kiss me but I never let him because there were rumors he was very interested in a girl in another town," Esther said. She did not believe she meant much to him, so the relationship was one of dancing partners. Also, Esther really didn't want anyone younger "because I didn't want to be known as a cradle-snatcher, a silly idea at the time." Arlington would always come to Esther's home at 1005 East Court to pick her up, and if her parents were at home, they would talk to him. There were no "goodnight kisses" at the door. One day Arlington and Esther drove to Lincoln to her Aunt Ann Hobbs' home, where they chatted briefly.

"Arly liked turtle-necked sweaters in high school, and he wore a suit to dances. It was his big event. Afterwards we would stop at an ice cream parlor, probably the Green Lantern Inn at 1101 South 6th Street. There was no smoking or drinking," said Esther, whose father Ed Legate was a barber and also leader of a band that played for dances around Nebraska. And she also recalled that "Arlington was the nicest boy I ever dated. Very much a gentleman with very nice manners, he was reserved, serious, honest, intelligent, a very good musician, and a very good dancer."

At the time, Esther worked as a cashier at the Iowa-Nebraska Gas Company, and after Taylor was in the movies, he telephoned her at least twice for dates when he came back to Nebraska, but she declined because she was dating Carl Aller, her husband-to-be. At the October 1936 homecoming for Taylor, she and co-worker Fred Stoll went to the high school and waited outside the door for him. Fred said to her, "Why don't you kiss him?" Esther reported that she didn't because at the time she thought, "I didn't let him when I dated him, so why should I do it now because he is a celebrity?"

Married to Carl Aller, owner of Aller Grain & Feed Company in Beatrice, Esther had one daughter, was a member of the YWCA and the Red Cross during World War II, played bridge and golf, and was active at the Beatrice Country Club. Starting in 1964, Esther traveled for fifteen consecutive years, visiting Alaska, Australia, Canada, China, Europe, Japan and South America. There were other Beatrice girls that Arlington dated, reported Paul Drew and Cyrus Hummer. One was 1928 graduate Helen Alexander, whose father was a Ford car dealer. Helen was a likable girl, about 5 feet 4 inches tall, with dark blonde hair and blue eyes. He also dated classmate Gertrude Hamilton, daughter of Pearl Hamilton, a baker. About 5 feet 2 inches tall, "she had very dark brown hair, blue eyes, and was a nice, outgoing, lively girl," commented Drew. Another classmate was Rosana Kilpatrick, daughter of Charles Sherwood, but adopted by Mr. S.D. Kilpatrick, a multi-millionaire railroad contractor. She had brown hair, blue eyes, and stood about 5 feet 3 inches. Still another classmate was Kathleen Mumford, whose father Charles was owner of Mumford Furniture at 113-115 South 6th Street. Kathleen was talkative, had a good personality, and was about 5 feet 3 inches tall with brown hair and blue eyes. According to Wymore High School graduate Marian Howe Boettcher, "Arlington was present at Kathleen's sixteenth birthday

party." All of these girls were in drama and other activities in which Arlington also participated. Despite his statement in a March 4, 1936 letter on MGM stationery to the late Delores Harmon Drew, a 1934 graduate and former neighbor as previously noted, "I was not his girlfriend," she pointed out.

Another girl Taylor dated while he was a junior at Beatrice High was Omaha native Bernice Grunwald, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduate in music in 1928. A member of Kappa Delta Sorority and a concert pianist in Lincoln, testified daughter Bernal Anderson, "my mother met Arlington on a blind date while she was in college, and on one of their dates he was a 'wildcat driver', spinning his car on a gravel road." According to Earl Jamison, the car would have been his father's Buick sedan.

Music and drama experiences in Beatrice

Taylor's interest in music originated with the Stanhope side of the family. 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...", and his first cousin Eva Jamison Warkentin Unruh reported that their aunts Ruth Brugh, Ethel Flaws, and Myrtle Beal occasionally sang during entertainments held at Chautauqua Park. Arlington himself sang in the choir of the Centenary Methodist Church while in high school. Vlcek remembered the piano was played by Mrs. Brugh, who in 1936 wrote, "When he (Arlington) was about ten, we had him start piano lessons from a man who came to Beatrice. When he was about twelve, he wanted to take saxophone lessons. I did not want him to; a saxophone was so noisy and jazzy." Meanwhile, Beatrice Public Schools music supervisor B.P. Osborn, who taught instrumental music at all schools from 1923 to 1926, had begun appreciation of classical music. He also encouraged students to compete in music events statewide. Jeanne Barger St. John, a Central School music participant in the 4th grade, added, "Osborn's favorites were stringed instruments." It was Osborn who "went to some trouble to convince Arlington that the cello was the instrument for a gentleman," wrote Kyle Crichton in his article "Heart Bumper" published in the October 3, 1936 issue of *Collier's*.

Arlington then took cello lessons in Lincoln once a week on Saturday mornings during the school year from February 1925 to 1929 with Herbert E. Gray, an instructor at the University School of Music, a private institution founded in 1894 that offered a bachelor's degree in music until it was purchased in 1930 by the University of Nebraska, and that was fully integrated by the University in 1937. At the time Arlington took lessons, the University School of Music was located at 11th & R Streets, the site presently occupied by Kimball Hall. Of interest in the history of music at these two institutions is Marilyn Hammond and Raymond Hagg's article "Willard Kimball: Music Educator on the Great Plains" published in the Fall 1991 issue of *Great Plains Quarterly*. Ruth Brugh in 1936 wrote of Taylor's experience with Gray: "I shall never forget the day we took him to Lincoln for his first lesson with Professor Gray. He told us that Robert did not handle the cello awkwardly, as most beginners do....And those cello lessons with Professor Gray, more than any other single factor, later led him to Hollywood and fame."

While an instructor in Lincoln from 1923 to 1931, including the two years at Doane College in Crete when Arlington attended there, Gray earned his bachelor's degree in 1929 from the University School of Music. He was a cellist in the Lincoln Symphony founded in 1926, and performed as a tenor soloist statewide for oratorios such as the Messiah. He also married Ulysses native Mary T. Creekpau, a 1925 graduate of the University of Nebraska. A former student of his was Emanuel Wishnow, a violinist and music professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln from 1933 to 1975, who stated in an October 29, 1992 interview that "Gray came from the East

Coast, where he played for Victor Herbert and others. He was a large, talkative man who was a persuasive, dominant personality."

Before his tenure in Nebraska, Gray was truly an accomplished musician. Born in Butte, Montana in 1893, he attended Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa, then served in World War I at Ft. Bliss, Texas, where he played cello, violin and trumpet in the band. Afterwards, he was engaged for a time in private study in voice and in cello with teachers in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York. For a time, Gray was a concert and operatic tenor soloist with various groups nationwide, including the French Opera in New Orleans. He played cello for Victor Herbert, a composer of more than 40 operettas from which came such songs as "Gypsy Love Song," "Kiss Me Again," and "The Streets of New York." And he also played for the New York Symphony Society led by the distinguished Walter Damrosch, a composer and music educator who presented on the NBC radio network from 1928 to 1942 the *Music Appreciation Hour* for American and Canadian schoolchildren.

Tutoring with Gray, a musician of much talent and stature, was indeed a significant event for Arlington. But he also gained many opportunities in the schools and the community of Beatrice to apply his cello lessons. Music supervisor Osborn continued to give special instruction to his most gifted musicians, including Arlington on the cello, Gerhart Wiebe, the violin, Herbert Jackson, the clarinet, and Don Abbott, the trumpet. During the 9th grade, Arlington was a member of the Junior High Orchestra under the direction of Irene Faulder, and in March 1926 he was one of four soloists to perform before an audience at Wymore. In May of that year, the orchestra also played for the Junior High Operetta.

During the 10th grade, he was a member of the string quartet along with Ora Dunn, Clyde Pfaff and Gerhart Wiebe that gave a public performance in April 1927; Arlington performed a cello solo titled "The Swan." A week later he was one of five students, including the string quartet, to represent the Beatrice Public Schools at the State Music Contest. During the 11th grade, the string quartet of Arlington, Alberta Lamphear, Pfaff, and Wiebe won second place at the State Music Contest in Lincoln in May 1928. And in the 12th grade, he continued as a member of the string quartet and of the orchestra which provided music for plays, banquets, and other special programs.

Outside of the schools Arlington also gained valuable experiences in more ways than one. Especially important was his participation in the 35-member community orchestra directed by Frank E. Lenhart, a mortician with the Bergmeier Funeral Home, and maintained from about 1924 to 1929. Comprised of volunteers that practiced each Sunday evening at the Barger residence at 807 High Street, it was an orchestra that played wherever Lenhart could obtain engagements, including church socials, town fairs, and even the Nebraska State Penitentiary. In October 1926 and March 1929, it played on radio station KFAB, then in Lincoln, and in May 1927 on WOW in Omaha. There was at least one performance at the Rivoli Theater in Beatrice; that was in January 1927.

Arlington also had an association with the Rivoli Theater at 516 Court. During high school, he listed himself in the city directory in 1929 as a musician there, and the May 5, 1929 *Beatrice Daily Sun* reported that he was a master of ceremonies for the Rivoli Revelers, a new 12-piece band that played 30 minutes before the main feature. Sometime in the 1920s, probably as a result of his activities at the Rivoli, he formed what proved to be a lifelong friendship with Arvid Eyth, a 1920 graduate of Beatrice High. He met Eyth when the latter was a "soda shooter" at the Owl Pharmacy at 420 Court. Eyth was quoted as saying that Arlington's "favorites were malted milks and a chocolate ice cream soda," and that "he wanted the water to be carbonated and not flat."

The handsome and talented Eyth became somewhat of a role model as well as a life-long friend. When he attended the University of Nebraska, he was an actor in student productions, and gained mention in the *Beatrice Daily Sun* in February 1924 for his act in the Lincoln Minstrel Show that appeared at the Gilbert Theater in Beatrice. In an article titled "Music and Comedy by Blackface Locals Delight Packed House" on February 26, Eyth was acclaimed for his part in a comedy skit with another performer, and the crowd was "unwilling to let them quit." In 1931, he was honored in national competition of the Junior Chamber of Commerce as editor of the local semi-monthly publication, and was named to the Chamber's National Board. He was later to gain his livelihood in Beatrice by managing farm property from his office at 113 North 6th Street.

Taylor's interest in the theater developed during childhood as a result of exposure to local movies, association with "home talent" performers such as Eyth, and experiences initiated by himself. In a June 2, 1951 article in the *Omaha World Herald*, it was reported that "while going through school in Beatrice, young Arlington went each Saturday night to a picture show with his parents." The mother also wrote in 1936 that "he used to mimic Charlie Chaplin — the shuffle, the snuffle, everything" and from time to time "he was playing that he was Tom Mix or William S. Hart," the great comic and cowboy silent screen actors respectively.

After World War I, the Brughs and other residents of the community had access to silent films at the Rialto Theater at 112 North 5th and the Gilbert Theater at 618 Court. The latter was the major theater at the time, and in 1921 it had a new "mammoth screen of 18 feet in dimension and was made of 'famous Velvet Gold Fibre'." The Gilbert was also the first to install a cooling system. On October 4, 1926 the Rivoli Theater at 516 Court opened. During his 1936 homecoming to Beatrice, the October 29 *Lincoln Evening Journal* quoted him as saying, "I sat in the first row the first night ... and believe it or not, I once sang on this stage (of the Rivoli)." He also reported he had been usher as well as a master of ceremonies of a style show there. In February 1929, the Rivoli was the first theater to have "talkies" within a 50-mile radius of Beatrice. A year earlier in May 1928, the Ritz Theater opened at 613 Court but was soon after renamed the Fox. Local audiences were aware that Burchard native Harold Lloyd, a famous silent screen comedian, had lived in Beatrice for a short time just after the turn of the century, and it was on September 1-2, 1920 that the first showing of one of his films occurred in Beatrice. It was *Haunted Spooks* at the Gilbert. His cousin Keith Lloyd was athletic director at Beatrice High at the time, but in the fall of 1923 moved to Los Angeles to attend the University of Southern California and roomed with his film star cousin. Harold Lloyd did return to the community for a visit in early November 1949.

There were other indications that Arlington had dramatic talent and interest during his elementary school years aside from imitating cowboy actors he saw on the screen while riding his pony at the Shimerda farm. It was reported by the September 1936 issue of *The Playbill*, an annual publication of the national dramatic fraternity Alpha Psi Omega, that "when only eight years old, he made his first public appearance. He wrote, and gave before his school in public assembly, a piece entitled 'The Sick Monkey'. At the age of ten, he wrote another piece on 'China' and presented it before several church and school groups." According to St. John, who as stated before lived across the street from the Brughs when they resided at 812 High Street, neither of the elementary schools Arlington attended — Fairview and Central — had an auditorium, "but Central had a large hall where plays could have been performed. It was more likely he gained these experiences in language classes that had 'show and tell' projects and sometimes had class projects involving dramatization of fairy tales such as 'Little Red Riding Hood'." She also remembered that Arlington displayed an urge to playact informally while living on High Street.

The boys in the neighborhood would kill birds with slingshots, and then some of the other children would collect them and hold funerals. "Arlington couldn't participate because his mother wouldn't let him play with the neighbors for fear of getting injured, but he wanted to either preach or sing," she said. Sometimes when the bird funerals were held, he would, while sitting on the porch of the Brugh home, yell to the other children, "Let me do it. Let me sing now." St. John also recalled, "On one occasion, Jane Robertson, who wore a thick braid, and Arlington got into a spat on the lawn of the Brughs after she had preached at a bird funeral. Entirely out of his normal behavior, he pulled her braid and swung his whole weight on it."

While in Beatrice, Taylor also became an admirer of actress Maude Adams (1872-1953), whose roles in such plays as *Peter Pan* in 1905 and *What Every Woman Knows* in 1908 enabled her to represent the spirit of youth and innocence. Her frequent tours made her admired from coast to coast, and according to Scribner's 1977 *Dictionary of American Biography*, "her insistence on privacy inevitably made her the most publicized actress in America." After her retirement in 1918, she reappeared on stage in 1931 and in 1934. According to Hollywood writer Harold Heffernan's article published in the Omaha *Sunday World Herald* on March 5, 1939, Taylor was quoted as saying of Maude Adams, "She represents a tradition of the stage which I was taught to admire as a youngster... She was a favorite, too, with my parents." In the same article, it was revealed that he also liked actresses Jean Arthur, Claudette Colbert, Bette Davis, Myrna Loy, and Barbara Stanwyck, authors Pearl Buck and Margaret Mitchell, first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and concert cellist Raya Garbousova.

Opportunities did exist in Beatrice for participation in community theater. The Gilbert was the location for home talent productions, hosting in 1924, for example, the Lincoln Minstrel Show with Arvid Eyth, the play "Ruth," and a benefit concert by the community symphony directed by William Fulton. In 1925, the newly opened Junior High provided an auditorium with a seating capacity of 1256, and it has remained to this day an important location for fine arts performances. In 1927, Beatrice High School offered for the first time a course in dramatics, though class plays or operettas had been annual events for years.

During the 12th grade, he expanded his dramatic experiences, though his mother wrote in 1936 that "we intended to let him decide what he would like to be." She stated that many, including C.B. Dempster, a High Street neighbor and head of the Dempster Mill Manufacturing Company, had suggested educating Arlington in dramatics, and predicted, "Some day that boy of yours will be a big movie star!" Taylor himself confirmed the urgings in his March 1, 1937 article when he wrote, "Perhaps such kind encouragement did give me ambition to act in high school plays." In October 1928, he played the role of a freshman in "Aunt Lucia," a play staged by the adults in the community. Other acts were presented on the same occasion, and his father Dr. Brugh was one of several to take part in the comedic "Bula Bula College Glee Club." According to a review published in the October 26 *Beatrice Daily Sun*, an enthusiastic, overflow crowd of 1,500 attended the first performance.

In his senior year at Beatrice High, he attended dramatics class, and was a member of the Dramatics Club. A major event that year was the three-act comedy "Nothing But The Truth" performed in December 1928. Arlington had one of the major roles as a hard-headed stockbroker who was not too scrupulous. In the December 16 *Beatrice Daily Sun*, a rave review was published under the headline "High School Players Stage Best Show In Number of Years." However, it was Gerhart Wiebe who received the most praise for his performance as the young hero. In the spring of 1929, however, Arlington had the male lead in the Senior High Operetta titled "Captain Crossbones" labeled in the 1929 *Homesteader* as "a great success." It revolved around a love theme

in which Arlington played opposite classmate and friend Gertrude Hamilton.

In April 1929, Arlington won first place in the oratorical category of a sectional contest held at Lewiston and at the District 1 contest at Beatrice with his talk entitled "Idealism in A School Teacher." Gerhart Wiebe won first place in the dramatic category with his performance titled "The Finger of God." At the 12th annual state drama contest held at Nebraska Wesleyan in Lincoln, Arlington was the state champion in the oratorical category. A total of 1,400 students participated in the state meet. By the end of high school, however, his performance in dramatics apparently did not attract widespread attention locally, for his mother 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."

After graduation from Beatrice High School in 1929, Taylor did not know what career he might pursue. But he made the decision to attend Doane College in Crete, Nebraska, at the time a town with a 1930 population of 2,865 residents and only a 33-mile drive northwest of Beatrice along the scenic Big Blue River Valley. Arlington may have been predisposed to select Doane, for as Esther Legate Aller recalled, "Many young people who could afford it in Beatrice in the 1920s and 1930s went to Doane because it was a smaller school, and parents thought a bigger school was 'wilder'." His father had contributed \$100 to the fundraising effort to bring Doane to Beatrice, reported the December 13, 1925 *Beatrice Daily Sun*. And his Doane drama coach-to-be Mary Ellen Inglis, who was a judge at the April 1929 declamatory contest in Beatrice, met him afterwards and urged him to select Doane as his college.

His mother wrote that he went to Doane because Professor Herbert E. Gray, his cello teacher 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 was quoted by Hall in 1936 as saying, "I could take my choice of going to Northwestern University (in Evanston, Illinois) alone, or I could go to Doane in Crete, and take Garry Wiebe with me. Dad would finance him for two years. We would be together. Garry was the only pal I had. I wanted to go to Northwestern for many reasons but, after due consideration, none of those reasons seemed to weigh as much as that Garry and I should go on together."

Two years at Doane College at Crete

Doane College, founded in Crete in 1872, and named in honor of Thomas Doane, chief engineer of the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad, was — and still is — a co-educational four-year liberal arts institution affiliated with the Congregational Church, now called the United Church of Christ. The March 1930 *Doane College Bulletin* reported, though "denominational in origin, it has never been subject to ecclesiastical control, nor has its work been in any sense sectarian. At the same time, its religious spirit and influence have always been strong and vital, having for their inspiration words of the college motto 'We Build on Christ'." Located on the bluffs, or hill, overlooking Crete, Nebraska in the Big Blue River Valley, it is a small college situated on 320 acres. It offers close student/faculty relationships in a "hilltop setting of quiet seclusion and beauty," wrote Donald J. Ziegler in *A College on a Hill, Life at Doane 1872-1987*, a history published in 1990.

During his two years that Taylor attended Doane, there were ten buildings on campus. The Carnegie Science Building contained biological, chemical, and physical laboratories as well as a museum and classrooms, and Boswell Observatory housed astronomical equipment, including eight-inch aperture telescope and meteorological instruments. Whitin Library held 22,300 volumes and 17,200 pamphlets, and Simon Athletic Field was newly constructed. Enrollment was almost

300 students with 24 full-time teaching faculty members, the vast majority with degrees from colleges around the nation.

Students during the 1929-30 school year could choose among seventeen majors: biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, economics, history, social science, English, French, German, Spanish, Latin, Greek, music, philosophy and psychology, religious education, and speech (dramatic art and public speaking). Of the 128 hours required for graduation, about half a student's work was comprised of electives. Many of its graduates received certification to teach in the public schools.

For the two years, Arlington was registered with the Department of Music, and overall he earned average grades in academics. During his freshman year, he received credit for one-year courses titled English Composition, 2nd Year French, French Composition, College Algebra & Trigonometry, Inorganic Chemistry, Orchestra, and Physical Training. He also took one semester of Freshman Orientation. In his sophomore year, he received credit for one-year courses titled the Old & New Testament, Principles of Economics, European History, General Psychology, Fundamentals of Speech, and Physical Training, and one-semester courses in the History of Socialism, Principles & Problems of Government, and Orchestra.

In the area of activities, however, Arlington excelled, especially during his freshman year. He was elected president of the largest freshman class at the time — some 90 members, he became a member of Iota Delta Chi, one of the local fraternities not affiliated with a national organization, and he was a member of both the Doane Symphony and the Doane Players. He also exhibited athletic prowess, though he apparently did not care for athletics. Boyhood friend A.J. Myers recalled that as a college student at Norfolk, Nebraska, he encountered Arlington at a track meet at York. And in the article "He's Still Arlington to Beatrice Home Folks", published in the November 1, 1936 Lincoln *Sunday Journal and Star*, it was reported that "in the spring, he went out for track and ran the hurdles faster than anyone else. Then he retired from competition."

A memorable accomplishment that year was winning an oratorical contest held in Crete on December 18, 1929 under the auspices of the Anti-Saloon League of Nebraska. The topic was "Ten Years of Prohibition", but Arlington was at first reluctant to enter despite urging by Mary Ellen Inglis, Head of the Speech Department, because he believed that three other contestants who were ministers had the advantage. He did enter after his mother, who appreciated the value of oratory and the interest Inglis took in his speaking abilities, promised him that if he won, he would receive a coonskin coat, a prestigious item he wanted badly. As the contest winner, he gained not only the coat but also a trip to Detroit, Michigan from January 14-21, 1930 to attend the national convention of the Anti-Saloon League of America as a guest of the League.

Another significant accomplishment 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 trumpet and French horn. The trio had formed in the fall of 1929, and along with Doane president Edwin Dean, they traveled to David City for a performance at a Doane Day service at the First Congregational Church in December 1929. On February 13, 1930, they performed at the annual Valentine's Day Banquet at Doane, where Arlington also gave a speech entitled "Hearts Resound to Cupid's Tread". The February 18, 1930 issue of *The Doane Owl*, the college's student newspaper, commented, "his theme was of romance not only among the students but of the alumni and students for Doane College".

During a week's road trip in March 1930 with the Doane Players, a dramatics group, to promote the college at several Nebraska communities, the trio went ahead of the troupe to sing and play in the high schools of the town where the drama group would perform in the evening. When

they got to the town of Harvard, it was Russ Gibson who suggested the trio go to nearby Clay Center and perform on radio station KMMJ to advertise the drama production. According to Gibson's letter of September 3, 1977, along with other papers on file at the State Archives at the Nebraska State Historical Society in Lincoln, the trio did broadcast on KMMJ on March 28-29. They 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 had become known as "The Harmony Boys", a title that may have been borrowed after a Lincoln group called "The Harmony Girls", which played at a Filley dance on August 18, 1926. And one of their feature songs was "Kathryn", composed by Dorothy J. Brandon, instructor of pipe organ and piano at Doane from 1928 to 1930. It was published in 1930 by Jazz of Chicago, and contained on its cover a photograph of "The Harmony Boys".

Taylor's experiences at KMMJ in Clay Center

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 65 miles west of Crete. The radio station was one of many enterprises in the town owned by the Johnson family, descended from M. M. Johnson (after whom the call letters in KMMJ are chosen), who in 1896 made the first poultry incubator in Nebraska. After the original Sure Hatch Incubator Company was sold in 1910 and moved to Fremont, the family formed a new company that manufactured Old Trusty incubators and brooders used to hatch and raise chickens on the farms. From an old Clay Center lumberyard the Johnsons built the original KMMJ Studio, but on January 1, 1931 the Studio occupied a new brick and concrete building. Both buildings were located at 321 Glenvil, where today stands the Clay County Museum. According to Gibson, it was also "large enough to house their store, which had many products for sale, blankets to incubators, fly sprayers to candy."

Its towers at the Clay Center City Park, KMMJ operated with 1,000 watts of power, and had a listening area that extended some 100 miles in all directions. George C. Kister was one of the early announcers who spent his 43-year career with KMMJ, even after its relocation in January 1939 to Grand Island, where today it is Nebraska's 6th oldest continuously licensed broadcasting station, operating on 750 kilohertz with 10,000 watts of power. In a manuscript of his January 5, 1979 interview housed with other items in the NSHS State Archives, Kister reported its "programming was mostly of rural nature with farm-oriented programs dominating."

The two summers at KMMJ provide an insight into the early days of radio and the talent Arlington and the two other trio members had. According to Kister, there were no networks at the time, so the station had its own announcing and entertainment staffs. There were 12 or more announcers, a staff of 35 to 50 entertainers, and all programming was live from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. The station broadcast news gathered from an early morning newspaper, "with the *Omaha Bee* the first source of news," commented Kister. Though "later on one of the KMMJ radio operators who could copy Morse Code used shortwave radio to pick up a news source in Teaneck, New Jersey, and he would spend most of the day copying news from this shortwave news station to be used in several newscasts during the day on KMMJ."

The entertainment staff 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 that was sold," Kister said. The Harmony Boys, who were given every other Sunday off, had three or four times a day their 15-minute program. And sometimes, as the August 6, 1930 KMMJ schedule revealed, they had a few 30-minute programs. According to Gibson, 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." He also reported that the trio sang in addition to playing with the instruments they used at Doane, and "patterned our style after the Rhythm Boys of Paul Whiteman," a renowned orchestra director on network radio for almost four decades.

The Harmony Boys of KMMJ were remembered by Kister for singing "Mississippi Mud", but Gibson wrote about an amusing anecdote involving Arlington. One day announcer "Dent Holcomb decided to make things a bit more realistic and started to moo like a cow. He yelled at Brugh to run out in the store and fetch an Old Trusty Sprayer so we could keep the flies off old Bessy. While the Studio was jammed with people, Brugh ran to the store, finally found the stack of sprayers, picked one, proceeded to run back to the Studio, which had three steps leading to the Studio, tripped on the top step, and came sliding home with the winning sprayer." Meanwhile, Holcomb was "hollering 'hurry, hurry,' and mooing and I want to tell you we could not continue, we went off the air, the audience out front was dying at the silly antics, and it was a bad day for Old Trusty Fly Spray." Gibson then presented the punch lines: "Brugh recovered, came running to the microphone, only to find out too late that he had picked a sprayer that contained a little of the spray, and he gave us all a good shot, including announcer Holcomb... I could not breathe for five minutes, to give you an idea of the potency of this stuff."

While living in Clay Center for the two summers, the trio stayed in the same room at the home of Ford dealer John Forsell at 321 North Clay Street. In the February 20, 1937 issue of the *Hastings Daily Tribune*, Gibson was quoted as saying, "His (Arlington) favorite food in Clay Center was hamburger steaks. He was especially particular about his clothes. He had ten suits there, and took all the closet space," and that "we were never extremely popular with the radio audience, and our fan mail was practically nil, but we did have lots of fun." Of his experiences in the summers of 1930 and 1931, Taylor was quoted in the October 26, 1963 issue of *The Lincoln Star* as saying, "Clay Center was a quaint and wonderful little town."

While he worked at KMMJ, Taylor did date at least two girls. One was Vera Bascom Church, now a Nathrop, Colorado resident with whom he had "a casual relationship", stated Clay Center resident Mid Thomas, who, like Vera, was a 1925 graduate of Edgar High School at nearby Edgar. At the time, Vera worked in a Clay Center bank, and was also a secretary at KMMJ. When she moved to Lincoln, he occasionally dated her while he was at Doane. They kept their friendship through occasional correspondence at least until October 1936, when Taylor returned from Hollywood for his Beatrice homecoming, and took the time to meet her at her Lincoln home at 1809 G Street for what he had hoped would be a private date. Instead, it — along with a photo of Vera — was reported in a lengthy article in the October 30, 1936 *Lincoln Evening Journal*. Perhaps Arlington's greatest love interest during his time at KMMJ and Doane College, according to Doane drama classmate and friend Beth Naden Kellar, now of Franklin, was Blanche Gilsdorf Hoepfner, who worked in Hastings in the summer of 1930. "Blanche Gilsdorf had a boyfriend at the time, and kept turning down Arlington's invitations, but finally she dated him a few times. He was crazy about her, and wanted to pursue the friendship further, but she declined," said Kellar.

The Harmony Boys went their separate ways after the summer of 1931, but they were reunited on national television in April 1967 on CBS-TV's *Mike Douglas Show*, which Taylor briefly co-hosted. According to the April 30, 1967 *Sunday Journal and Star*, the producers had arranged for a surprise meeting. When Douglas asked Taylor to sing something from his early radio days, he showed his reluctance. So Douglas said he had "a couple of guys back here to help you out," and there appeared Wiebe and Gibson, the latter being quoted as saying, "it was great fun

for all of us, although too brief. We did a number together, but it wasn't very professional, I'm afraid."

During his sophomore year, Arlington continued his participation in the Doane Symphony Orchestra and the Doane Players, and he was a member of the Doane String Quartet.

Music and drama experiences at Doane

The Music Department in which he matriculated offered a major that led to a bachelor of arts degree, with instruction in piano, organ, voice, and violin. There were many cultural opportunities provided by concerts of the college orchestra, choirs, and a variety of choral ensembles, performances by a band, and recitals of both faculty and students. Housed in the Whitcomb Conservatory/Lee Memorial Chapel, music faculty and students had access to seventeen rooms and an auditorium which, when combined with several side rooms, increased the seating capacity to six hundred. Arlington certainly felt comfortable with the presence of Herbert E. Gray, his cello teacher from Lincoln, who in the fall of 1929 became a part-time instructor of string instruments at Doane and served in the capacity of a mentor for him.

His music experiences during his freshman year — aside from those with The Harmony Boys — involved playing with the Doane Symphony Orchestra, comprised of 35 members and directed by Professor C. Burdette Wolfe. According to *The Crete News*, public performances were given at Homecoming "Pop" Concert in October 1929, the Lee Memorial Chapel in March 1930, and the Bohemian Concert in the Chapel a month later.

Taylor's sophomore year in music involved his continued participation in the Doane Symphony but a more rewarding experience came with the Doane String Quartet comprised of Professor C. Burdette Wolfe, viola; Millard Taylor, Crete, 1st violin; Wendell Adams, Omaha, 2nd violin; and Arlington, cello. Their first 1930-31 public appearance was in the Lee Memorial Chapel in October, followed by early November performances at the Gaylord Hall parlor on campus and at an afternoon convocation at Wilber High School in nearby Wilber. (On November 6, Arlington took time to play at an Inter-City Rotary Banquet at the Sokol Hall in Wilber before some 150 Rotarians from Beatrice, Crete, Fairbury, Lincoln, Seward, and Wilber, reported the April 12, 1935 issue of *The Wilber Republican*. He had been part of a salon orchestra organized by Bernard Klasek, a 1923 Doane graduate and later a public school administrator in Saline County for over 50 years.) Thanksgiving vacation was used for out-of-town engagements, first in Lincoln for a broadcast by radio station KFAB on a Friday, then on KMMJ the next day. On Sunday, they drove to the towns of Albion and Newman Grove in northern Nebraska for concerts at the First Congregational Church and the Methodist Church respectively.

During the Christmas season they performed at Gaylord Hall, and in early January 1931 traveled to eastern Iowa to play at Marshalltown and at Grinnell College, then at Drake University at Des Moines and at the town of Exira on the return trip. In February, the Quartet traveled to Omaha for performances at Central Park and at the First Central Congregational Church, and Arlington played the cello solo "The Swan", accompanied by pianist Velda Brown of Crete, a first-year Doane student, at the First Congregational Church at 12th & Ivy in Crete.

On Sunday, March 1, the Quartet played at the Centenary Methodist Church in Beatrice, and was entertained for lunch at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Brugh. On March 13, they performed at the Lee Memorial Chapel, and the March 19, 1931 *Crete News* published the editorial comment that "it was one of the best presentations we have had this year from the Quartet." On April 22, they traveled to the town of Ashland for a performance, and on June 2nd played for Alumni Day festivities on the Doane campus. A different trio other than The Harmony Boys was also part of

Arlington's music activity at the close of his sophomore year. Along with Professor Wolfe and Marian Hulquest, he played at Shenandoah, Iowa in April and May and at the Women's Club in nearby Friend, Nebraska in May 1931.

Throughout his two years at Doane in the field of music, Arlington worked closely behind the scenes with Doane's part-time cello instructor Herbert E. Gray, and they performed together in the Lincoln Symphony. Emanuel Wishnow, one of Gray's students in Lincoln at the time, recalled seeing Arlington occasionally play in the Lincoln Symphony, likely from 1929 to 1931. The relationship Gray had with Arlington and his parents went smoothly, though he felt some frustration when Arlington devoted time to dramatics at Doane. Mrs. Brugh explained it in part in 1936 by writing, "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 in a 1937 quotation by Hall 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."

The Speech Department offered 18 semester-long courses, including a two-year diploma in Dramatic Art. By the fall of 1929, it had become important at Doane, reported historian Ziegler, largely because of the influence of Mary Ellen Inglis, a native of Pawnee City, who was instructor of speech from 1922 to 1935. With only a bachelor's degree from the University School of Music in Lincoln and study at the Theater Arts Institute in London in the summer of 1927, Inglis created the elect group known as the Doane Players. They annually staged three major plays, performed in several communities in the spring on a college promotional trip, and held a winter or spring banquet. She also included in the speech curriculum such courses as Voice and Characterization, Play Production, and Repertoire, and directly or indirectly sponsored six one-act plays each school year.

"Inglis was very popular among the students," stated Evelyn Overman Morrison, a native of Western, a 1929 Doane graduate, and now a Fremont, California resident. "She was gentle, outgoing, and loving as a director and a person, and expected her students to do their best in a kind and gentle, not demanding manner. She liked Arlington Brugh, and helped his confidence." Her impact on her students was long lasting. Taylor clearly held her in high esteem, explaining "his appreciation for the part she had in starting him on the right road during the important formative period of his life," reported the September 1936 issue of *The Playbill*, an annual publication of the Alpha Psi Omega, a national dramatic fraternity. And he specifically requested that Mrs. Inglis-Farries be present at Doane College on October 25, 1963 for a convocation and fundraising dinner held in his honor. And after her death, former students held a memorial at Doane on May 14, 1988, to honor her contributions, and to establish a continuing Mary Ellen Inglis-Farries Memorial Fund in Support of the Theater Department. After leaving Doane in 1935, she had married T.H. Farries, gave birth to a daughter, and taught hearing-impaired students from 1945 to 1952 at the Wilber Public Schools, which at the time had one of only two such day schools in Nebraska. After that, she directed religious education for a Methodist Church in St. Louis, Missouri.

During his freshman year in dramatics, Arlington gained valuable experience as a member of the Doane Players, which rehearsed at Lee Memorial Chapel and usually performed at Sokol Theater (now Sokol Hall), located at the northeast corner of 12th and Norman Streets in Crete. Built in 1915, the brick structure is still in use today. And according to Nebraska State Historical

Society architect David Murphy, author of "Dramatic Expressions: Czech Theater Curtains in Nebraska" published in *Nebraska History*, Fall 1993, the interior of the Crete Sokol Hall has one of the best collections of theater curtains in Czech halls in Nebraska.

On September 25, 1929, Taylor had auditioned for membership, and underwent formal initiation on October 2 by assuming the character of "Pa Sassafras." He was a cabbage grower from Pumpkin Center who had a wife and small son, and found buyers for his cabbages on the streets of the Crete business district. His first performance was for the established members of 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 had a tragic ending while apartment hunting. On this occasion, he also sang with Russ Gibson, Gerhart Wiebe, and Roland Schaffert in a group called the "Serenaders." In November he gave a cello solo in connection with the one-act play "The Finger of God" performed at the First Congregational Church in Crete.

Taylor's first public appearance as an actor at Doane was on December 19, 1929 in the minor role of young Gerald Tilden in Ida L. Ehrlich's "Helena's Boys," which was staged at the Sokol Theater in Crete. The December 26 issue of the *Crete News* reported "the Doane Players of 'Helena's Boys' make a hit." This play was also selected for the Players 7th annual spring trip from 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. As previously described, it was during this trip that the trio of Arlington, Gibson and Wiebe appeared ahead of the troupe for advertising purposes, and were offered a job at KMMJ. 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 James Bartley, a district attorney with political problems.

In his sophomore year, Arlington was cast in the minor role of Ned Seton in Philip Barry's "Holiday," performed on November 19, 1930. This required him to play the role of a boy who began drinking alcohol to suppress his real feelings. On January 16, 1931, he was one of 24 members to attend the 8th annual Doane Players Banquet at the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Crete. Toastmaster was his best friend Gerhart Wiebe, and on the menu for the main course was roast duck and mashed potatoes. On January 31, 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. According to the February 3, 1931 issue of *The Doane Owl*, "Arlington Brugh...did outstanding work in his role." 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. The 1931 *Tiger*, the Doane yearbook, reported it "was the most successful of all trips ever taken."

During his two years as a member of the Doane Players, Arlington became a member of the dramatic fraternity Delta Omicron cast. It qualified him for membership in Alpha Psi Omega, a national dramatic fraternity that in September 1936 featured him in Arthur F. Hommel's five-page article "Robert Taylor, Screen Idol, Alpha Psi Omegan" in its annual publication *The Playbill*.

Taylor's social activities while at Doane

The social development of Arlington Brugh during his two years at Doane continued much as it had at Beatrice. Despite advantages other students did not have, he maintained a lifestyle appropriate for his time, was well liked on campus, and continued in close contact with his parents.

Like the 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 13th Street in Crete. (The Spadts had part ownership in the Keystone Grocery at 124 East 13th Street.) In the June 12, 1969 *Crete News* article "'Doc' Brugh Is Remembered by Crete Citizens," Mrs. Steve Riege, a neighbor at the time, recalled that "he had the reputation for neatness that was unusual for a college boy." And Francis Menke of Crete, a 1932 graduate of Doane, was quoted as remembering him as "a 'realist,' a man raised with religious principles and high morals who always conducted himself in a manner which reflected his upbringing."

Because "Doc," as Arlington was known on campus, had joined the Order of DeMolay in Beatrice, he persuaded Menke to become a member, and both drove to Lincoln to attend meetings of the DeMolay Chapter sponsored by the Scottish Rite Temple, a national organization of Masons. A nonsectarian group that promotes moral teachings, meets twice a month, and limits its membership to boys, DeMolay asks that a boy believe in a supreme being and attend church. According to Walter Miller, a retired executive officer of the Nebraska Order of DeMolay, "Robert Taylor was recognized for his outstanding achievement by being awarded membership in the Legion of Honor, the top honor given by the national organization known at the time as the Grand Council of the Order of DeMolay."

Though the Doane boys lived off campus in 1929, they were required to eat dinner at the college cafeteria in Gaylord Hall, the girls' dormitory, thereby affording a social life at the same time. Eight people were seated at a table, and rotated weekly as were the hosts and hostesses.

They then met in the drawing room next to the dining area. In the spring of 1930, the new Men's Hall (renamed Smith Hall in 1977 after index tags inventor Charles Carman Smith of Exeter) opened, and Arlington lived there during his sophomore year, according to Raymond Reed, a graduate of 1935 who began attending in 1929 and then taught music part-time at Crete High School. Arlington roomed on the first floor, probably with Gerhart Wiebe, while Reed stayed down the hall on the same floor. All the boys continued to eat in the Gaylord Hall cafeteria.

There were a variety of social activities which interested Arlington. As a freshman, he, like everyone else, participated in the Doane ritual of wearing a green cap every day except Sunday on the campus, in Crete, or anywhere until Thanksgiving 1929. College dances were held in the basement of Whitin Library from 1928 to 1930, recalled Verdelia Brown Morton, a 1930 graduate and a native of Fairmont, though dances were also held in the gym. At these events, which usually lasted from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m., individuals followed a custom involving a card with a list of dances with other people, perhaps 15 names to a full card. This was done even if a person went with a date. Dances were both formal and informal, with the two step and informal waltz as favorites of the time. The young men at Doane dressed in suits on evening outings and dates, and the women had an 11 p.m. curfew. Mrs. Morton further remembered, "All girls thought Taylor at Doane was a good looking, friendly guy. I saw him attend a Good Friendship Society (GFS) sorority banquet with Iris West. It was a formal occasion at the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Crete."

A favorite off-campus gathering place for late afternoon breaks was Kind's Cafe at 123 East 13th in Crete. Iris West Aller, a native of Hayes Center, a 1932 graduate, a friend of Doc's, and now a Lawrence, Kansas resident, stated that "Arlington frequented the Cafe, and would order pie and coffee." Reed remembered another popular place for college students was the Tiger Inn near the campus at 13th & Forest. Taylor also attended Doane basketball and football games, and in the 1936 *Omaha World Herald* article of November 1 he was quoted as saying, "I used to come to Lincoln for lots of Nebraska games when I was at Doane."

Some students went canoeing on the Big Blue River on the west edge of Crete, a tradition

that lasted until 1935, reported historian Ziegler. Some went dancing at Horky's Park (now the Blue River Lodge) located 2 miles west and 2 miles north of Crete. At the time, this private recreation area had 60 cottages, picnic grounds, a swimming pool, a new lake for boating, and dancing on weekends, usually featuring lively Czech music such as the polka. Mrs. Morton fondly remembered that "the GFS would stay overnight at a cabin at Horky's once a year, and there were also picnics on the weekends."

Couples also went dancing at Antelope Park in Lincoln, and afterwards, according to Iris West Aller, "a popular eating place was the Comhusker Hotel, where Doane fraternities also held parties." Arlington was one of the few students at Doane to own a car, the orange-beige 1929 Buick sports coupe his father had bought him for his senior year at Beatrice High, and he had perhaps a little more spending money, especially in an era of difficult economic times. Consequently, there was much double-dating at Doane, and Arlington may have occasionally double-dated with Gerhart Wiebe, whose steady girlfriend at the time was Evelyn Hiatt of Lincoln. Fraternity brother Laurence L. Phipps of Randolph, Iowa, and a 1932 graduate, was quoted as saying that Arlington "dated some but not excessively." But Josephine Jurena Jacobs, now of Lincoln and a friend of a former Doane fraternity member during the 1929-31 era, reported that "some of the Doane boys got jealous of Taylor because he had a car and dated all the best women. The boys tried to boycott Taylor because he was having too good a time."

His female friendships at Doane were for the most part casual, an assertion confirmed by a few friends and by his mother who in 1936 wrote, "Once in a while, in his letters, he would mention some girl. Doane was coed, and he liked several girls there. But as for his getting serious about any of them, I do not think so." Two Doane women who were Arlington's friends but with no romantic interest were classmates Beth Naden Kellar and Murial Austin Seyler, of Franklin, Nebraska and Lawrence, Kansas respectively, who sometimes arranged dates for Doc with their friends, such as Sue Ready Somsen and Harriet Whitney Staley, the latter from Grand Island, a member of Phi Sigma Tau sorority, and secretary of her Doane graduating class of 1931. Mrs. Seyler, who was about 5 feet 5 inches tall with light blonde hair and blue eyes, had two dates with Arlington, and recalled one of them occurred in March 1930 when the Doane Players were in Franklin, her hometown. "I asked Arly to dance, but he said that his mother said not to dance on Sunday, so we had a date that consisted of conversation," she said.

In the view of Mrs. Kellar, "Doc was a very nice fellow, very shy. He was just a plain guy." And Iris West Aller, who was 5 feet 3 inches tall with dark brown hair and hazel eyes and was a member of the GFS, recalled, "Arlington was a nice friendly fellow I enjoyed being around. He was a gentleman in his manner and in his decorum, a normal person who liked to be around people and was interested in a variety of topics. Neat, clean and tidy, he wore sweaters and suits on dates, and had friends at other Nebraska colleges, not just Doane." Another who had a few dates with Arlington was Mildred Whitney Foster, a 1928 Crete High graduate who also attended Doane and presently a Boulder, Colorado resident. She remembered going ballroom dancing with him at the Hotel Cornhusker in Lincoln, the Sokol Hall in Crete, and at Wilber once, "probably at the Opera House or the newly opened Sokol Auditorium in 1930." The five-foot two-inch tall blue-eyed blonde also recalled what seems an ironic experience with Arlington. "Once when we attended a movie in Lincoln, Greta Garbo was the leading lady, but Arlington didn't care for the movie, so he said, 'Let's leave,' and we did." Mrs. Foster also stated that he was a generous person, and noted, "When he went on his trip to Detroit, he let me drive his car left behind in Crete."

Taylor's longest relationship at Doane was with Kathryn Bender Boekel of Crete, who lived with her parents Charles and Della Gillete Bender at 1611 Ivy. Her father owned Bender's, a candy

and ice cream shop located at the northeast corner of 13th & Main. About 5 feet 4 inches tall with light blonde hair and blue eyes, Kathryn, now a Lincoln resident, attended Doane for two years, belonging to the sorority Phi Sigma Tau and serving as vice president of the sophomore class, then attended Colorado University in Boulder for one year. Arlington and Kathryn met on October 9, 1929 when both were formally accepted as members of the Doane Players, and she recalled, "He was very handsome, I told him I was a member, too, and said, 'Congratulations Mr. Brugh'." That December she played a minor role in "Helena's Boys" and dated Brugh in the play as well as in real life. They had dates two or three times a month as freshmen, and continued until the middle of the sophomore year. Sometimes he would contact her after class or call her at home for dates, and they would attend college functions, such as sports events, then go out afterwards. "We also went on a picnic at Horky's Park, and attended movies at the Isis Theater at 139 West 13th," she said. The Isis is still in use today at the same location.

Arlington wore sweaters on dates, and Kathryn called him Doc, and as a freshman he in fact gave her a photograph of himself autographed, "Best regards, Doc." He also let her use his car, since she lived at home. There was no drinking or smoking, and though her parents would not allow her to attend public dances in college, they did attend a fraternity dance in Lincoln. There was also dinner two or three times with Arlington's parents in Beatrice, and on one occasion in the summer of 1930 after he took Kathryn home, he stayed overnight at the home of Francis Menke at 520 Grove Avenue because, as Menke was quoted as saying in *The Crete News*, "his parents were strict and did not allow him to be on the road after 11 p.m...on this particular occasion, with the guestroom in readiness, he chose to crawl into bed with John Menke (Francis' father) rather than muss another bed."

Like other women who dated Arlington at Doane, Kathryn had a high regard for him and believed he didn't realize how handsome he was at the time. And she 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. He also had a wonderful widow's peak." Apparently he thought highly of her, too. In her 1931 *Tiger*, he wrote on May 14, 1931 in part, "We've had a lot of good times together these past two years and I hope that we've been good friends all the time. We have as far as I am concerned. Remember the 1930 spring Players trip — remember the night going to Sutton from Fairmont — remember our croquet games and those nights last summer? I surely do." And while she was at summer school in Boulder, he wrote to her from Clay Center on July 6, 1931, and fondly recalled in one paragraph, "You asked if I remembered the night of the 3rd of July last year? I certainly do. I had a good time, did you? In fact I enjoyed every one of those nights last summer. Remember how we used to sit out on the porch swing or else on the steps of the back porch, and talk. We were wonderful friends and I don't know why we ever broke up, so to speak, as we did. I guess that it is just one of those unexplainable things." In his final paragraph, he added, "Have a good time, study hard, and keep planning on steak fries sometime in August," and he closed with "Love, Arlington."

It is noteworthy that their friendship was remembered in the community. For example, the June 12, 1969 *Crete News* used the subheading "romance" to represent what several local citizens recalled about Taylor and Bender, and the staff of the 1931 *Tiger* had commented about it in a gentle, half-page spoof on page 109. For a play entitled "Act IV — A Soliloquy," the setting was the Lincoln highway after the Cotner football game, and it starred Kathryn Bender, whose lines were as follows: "Oh Doc, please don't let's park here! Oh Doc, please don't let's park...! Oh Doc, please don't let's...! Oh Doc, please don't...! Oh Doc, please...! Oh Doc...! Oh...!!" The play ended with "Curtain!! (That curtain is getting to be a nuisance)" and the postscript "Editor's Note: The

next seventeen acts have been censored by the Board of Publications. We continue with the twenty-third act."

Taylor's reputation as a lover had clearly preceded his Hollywood roles, but Kathryn's perspective 60 years later in an interview on December 6, 1991 at her Lincoln apartment put their particular relationship thusly: "At the time we went together, it was a matter of dating, not a serious love relationship or affair, and I am proud to say, when his name comes up, that I dated him at the time. It was a very interesting moment in my life."

There was no correspondence between them after Arlington left for Pomona College in the fall of 1931, though Kathryn did say "I was happy for him and proud of him when he became a hit at the time of the mid-1930s. I wrote him a note at the time, and his Mother answered because he was so busy." In 1942, she married A. E. Boekel of Crete, who attended the University of Nebraska and was in marketing for Sinclair Refining Company until 1966, and during that time they lived in Omaha, Minneapolis, Kansas City, and Cedar Rapids. Her uncle, Guy Gillete, was a U.S. Senator from Cherokee, Iowa for eighteen years, and another uncle was a rear admiral in the U.S. Navy.

Taylor's two years at Doane enabled him to sort through his career options, even though he had not yet decided upon becoming an actor, his character remained constant despite his success and popularity, and he continued his close relationship with his parents. He eliminated law and ministry as career choices, and he did not have strong feelings for becoming a professional cellist. Hall also quoted him as saying in 1937, "I liked dramatics better than anything else, but still thought of them as a hobby, something to play about with until the real business of life should begin." During the middle of his sophomore year, he wrote to his parents, explaining that he wanted to drop out of Doane and enroll in medical school, perhaps Johns Hopkins University, and then later enter the American School of Osteopathy in Kirksville to follow in his father's footsteps. His mother in 1936 wrote, "But we felt that he was too young to be positive that he wanted to devote his life to medicine. We persuaded him to wait until he finished college before he decided definitely." Arlington continued to express interest in medicine in his July 6, 1931 letter to Kathryn Bender, but in the November 1936 issue of *The Journal of Osteopathy*, which excerpted part of his interview published in the September 20, 1936 *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, he was quoted as saying, "I gave that up (becoming a doctor) when I saw what I'd have to go through in the way of preliminary chemistry; I wasn't good at that." During the interview for the article, Taylor, who had a chronic back problem, underwent osteopathic treatment, and over two years later, the January 1938 *Journal of Osteopathy* reported he received similar treatment in London during his trip to England for the filming of *A Yank at Oxford*.

Despite his success and popularity, he remained true to himself and left behind an enormous amount of goodwill and pleasant memories. Mrs. Seyler, a friend, observed that "Arly was always in good favor with the faculty, and he visited often with Birdena Donaldson, the Dean of Women. He enjoyed older people." Sylvia Smrz Klasek, currently a Wilber resident, was enrolled in the Department of Music at Doane from 1928 to 1930, and played the piano. She was an accompanist for Arlington several times when he practiced his cello at her home at 1645 North Main in Crete. "He was always dressed in a suit, white shirt, and bow tie, and was very handsome and polite," she said. And Evelyn Overman Morrison, who substituted for speech instructor Mary Ellen Inglis during the spring semester of Arlington's sophomore year, stated, "He was very well-liked by all the students, very popular, very talented. We all realized he was going far in his acting field. You never felt he was ever lordling his success over anyone, and he was polite to everyone."

The close relationship Arlington maintained with his parents was evident during his Doane

years, and their influence on his development cannot be minimized. It was noticed by at least two of his friends. Mrs. Iris Aller volunteered that "he thought a good deal of his mother," and Mrs. Kathryn Bender Boekel stated that he was "devoted to his parents." His mother in 1936 wrote that while he was at Doane, "he would drive home two or three times a week... and he was always so good about writing, telling us everything that he was doing." And Arlington himself wrote in his July 6, 1931 letter to Kathryn Bender in reference to his choice of staying at Doane to finish his requirements for entering a medical school that "I really like Doane and would hate to leave all the friends that I have there. Then, too, I would be close to home and the folks. That means a lot to them and more to me than I realize now."

The Transfer to Pomona College in Claremont, California

Taylor's 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 (which in 1930 had purchased the University School of Music) to fill a vacancy at Pomona College in Claremont, California, where he would be instructor of voice, orchestral instruments, and ensemble work. Arlington understood that Gray hoped he would transfer to Pomona College, for Gray had spoken to his parents "at great length about Pomona," his mother wrote in 1936, arguing it "had a high scholastic rating and was a much larger college than Doane." Eventually a decision had to be made. The mother wrote that "the doctor and I believe that a larger college might be more beneficial... we knew that we could trust him (Arlington)... Professor Gray would be there to advise him; and nearby, in San Bernardino, was my husband's former partner, Dr. Gass, who would watch out for him." Sometime in the summer, Doane College offered Gray's music position to Arlington, even though he was still a student. Taylor in 1937 wrote, "I drove home to talk it over with my parents and 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..." At the time, neither the parents nor Arlington thought of the proximity of Hollywood to Pomona College, reported the mother.

While at Pomona College for his junior and senior years, Taylor prepared for a career in business and continued his association with Professor Gray, who proceeded to remain at Pomona from 1931 to 1936. (Afterwards, Gray was a music supervisor with the San Bernardino County Schools for several years, then owned the Crown Music Store in Pasadena from 1949 to 1965). Taylor also fell in love "for the first time, really, in my life," Hall quoted him as commenting, with a girl who attended Pomona but who went unnamed. He also formed a friendship with Professor Robert Ross of the Department of Psychology. It was in the summer after his junior year that he enrolled in Ross' six-week lecture course on psychiatry, and the result was assertions later made in the media that he had intended to become a psychiatrist. But in 1937 Hall quoted Taylor's reaction thusly: "The time I gave to it has been considerably over-rated in various articles which have been written about me."

That same summer of 1932, Arlington returned to his Beatrice home after completion of Ross' course, and Doane College offered him various inducements to return to Crete for his senior year. His mother recalled, "They urged him so strongly... it did look to me as if he was a little too easily influenced; his father and I hoped that he would stay at Pomona." Of course, Taylor did, and as related by biographer Wayne in her *Robert Taylor*, he 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". The 1933 *Metate*, the Pomona College annual, contained a review of the play, which also offered the statement, "Arlington Brugh

gave an intense and finely drawn performance as Captain Stanhope, the harassed commanding officer whose nerves were near the breaking point."

Probably the only Beatrice native present at one of the stagings of "Journey's End" to see Arlington's acting was Marian Sherwood Weston, a 1932 Beatrice High graduate and an acquaintance. She had been in the audience because at the time she was a freshman at Scripps College, also in Claremont. A life-long resident of Beatrice, Weston kept a diary from her freshman year, and her entry for Friday, December 2, 1932 read, "Just got back from Holmes Hall on the Pomona campus, where we saw the Pomona College presentation of 'Journey's End'. Arly Brugh was in it and he and all the cast were excellent. It was a darn good production." She was also elated a few weeks later when she learned he had been contacted by an MGM talent scout. "We were all conscious of the prominence of the movies at the time, and it was a big thrill for me to think he might become a screen star," she said.

After Arlington was offered in early 1933 a screen test at MGM Studios at Culver City, he had written to his parents for advice, and according to his March 1, 1937 piece in the *Lincoln Nebraska State Journal*, his father 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 back to take dramatic instruction from its dramatic coach Oliver Hinsdell. He did so two times a week for about a month, then decided to concentrate on completion of his coursework at Pomona College. On June 19, 1933, he was among 194 graduates awarded a bachelor's degree, and present for commencement were his parents. In the 1933 *Metate*, the college annual credits under his graduation photo reveal he had belonged to the Masquers Society, Phi Delta fraternity, and Doane College. His hometown listed was Beatrice.

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, the mother wrote in 1936, "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 for an inflamed or ruptured gall bladder at the Lutheran Hospital in Beatrice, causing Arlington to return home for almost a month. Psychology professor Robert Ross had done the driving. After his father seemed to improve, he said to Arlington, according to author Gladys Hall, "I'm all right now, son. You go back to Hollywood and work hard. Maybe you won't ever be president, but you might get to be another Tom Mix." But after his father died on October 15, 1933, Arlington flew home for the funeral held at the Centenary Methodist Church on October 18th. As reported in the *Beatrice Daily Sun* of that date, "the attendance was large and the floral offerings profuse." Casket bearers were Nathan Mudge, Ray Macy, E. F. Witt, W. I. Reed, and Dexter Bridges of Beatrice, and Anthony Shimerda of Wilber. There were 13 honorary casket bearers, several of whom were from the Beatrice medical community. Harman Mortuary of 623 Elk Street was responsible for arrangements. The body of S. A. Brugh was placed in a receiving vault in Evergreen Home Cemetery on the east edge of Beatrice, but seven years later it was moved to Forest Lawn Memorial-Park at 1712 South Glendale Avenue in Glendale, California and interred in the Great Mausoleum on October 28, 1940.

His father's death was a deep loss. As Hall quoted Taylor's reaction, "I thanked my father then for teaching me to handle situations. He had met life and death and all of the exigencies of both with firm sympathy, with matter-of-fact common sense. I tried to follow in his footsteps." For a while it appeared Taylor might remain in Beatrice, for he wrote in his March 2, 1937 article that "Mother wanted to stay in Nebraska while I returned to Hollywood, but I refused. I planned to stay in Beatrice with her and found myself a job in an oil station." So while she thought over the

dilemma, he helped her with settling an estate, which included auctioning off many of the family's possessions. After Mrs. Brugh decided Arlington should not pass up the opportunity to use his abilities, they departed Beatrice on November 25, 1933, and took rooms on Franklin Circle in Hollywood, where he re-enrolled in the MGM dramatic school under the coaching of Hinsdell. In his article "Anything Can Happen in Hollywood" published in the October 1936 *Ladies Home Journal*, Taylor gave an in-depth explanation of his training on the 82-acre layout of MGM Studios, and revealed the amount of hard work and discipline required. On February 6, 1934, he signed a contract with MGM, and the event was duly noted in the Beatrice, Crete, Lincoln and Omaha newspapers.

His name was changed to Robert Taylor, and he was loaned to 20th 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. Notice of his debut was published in Lincoln newspapers, and the August 2 *Beatrice Daily Sun* carried an advertisement by the Fox Theater that said, "Coming Monday (August 6) *Handy Andy* with Beatrice's own Arlington Brugh." After a year and a half under contract, he gained the attention of Nebraska newspapers. In the July 14, 1935 Lincoln *Sunday Journal and Star*, more than a full page was devoted to him by Lulu Mae Coe in "Robert Taylor Is Off to the Stars" with the subtitle "With Ability as his Rocket, Former Gage County Youth Is More Than Making good in Hollywood," and the July 21 *Sunday (Omaha) World Herald* ran a short article entitled "23-Year-Old Nebraskan Latest 'Find' in Movies". On October 27, the *Sunday World Herald* published his photo with Keith Wilson's article "Youthful Beatrice Actor Climbing Hollywood Trail".

His career blossomed, and for accounts of his professional and personal lives from 1934 to 1969, one may consult Jane Ellen Wayne's biographies titled *Robert Taylor* (St. Martin's Press, 1973, 1987) and *Stanwyck* (St. Martin's Press, 1986) and Lawrence Quirk's *The Films of Robert Taylor* (Citadel Press, 1975).

The Hollywood years and his mother's visits to Nebraska

During his years as a film star, Taylor established residence in the Los Angeles area, looked after the well-being of his mother, and maintained his life-long attachment to Nebraska in a variety of ways.

At first he stayed with his mother in a rental house in Beverly Hills, and was part of a household that also included his grandmother Eva Stanhope, a secretary, and a maid. In August 1935 he moved into a rented eight-room house just four blocks away, then in July 1937 purchased a 27-acre ranch estate in Tarzana in the San Fernando Valley just 15 miles north of the MGM Studio in Culver City. According to the article "Hollywood's Unmarried Husbands and Wives" in the January 1939 issue of *Photoplay*, his property was adjacent to the home of Barbara Stanwyck, whom he met three years earlier. Taylor and Stanwyck were married on May 14, 1939 just after midnight in San Diego at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Whelan, their friends. Whelan was formerly from O'Neill, Nebraska, had studied at Creighton Prep in Omaha, and after becoming an attorney in California, he developed many acquaintances in the movie colony, reported the May 15, 1939 *Omaha World Herald*. Municipal Judge Phil Smith performed the ceremony, with Mrs. Zeppo Marx, matron of honor, and Buck Mack, actor and godfather of Miss Stanwyck, best man. Afterwards, Taylor and Stanwyck rented a home on Arden Drive in Beverly Hills, then bought a house at 400 St. Cloud Street, and finally in the mid-1940s owned a large home at 423 North Faring Road, both in the Bel-Air section of Los Angeles.

After their divorce was granted on February 21, 1951, Stanwyck auctioned off the

\$100,000 mansion and all its furnishings, and collected 15 percent of Taylor's earnings until he died in 1969. For the record, she visited Nebraska only once, taking part in the world premiere of the movie *Union Pacific* in Omaha on April 28, 1939. Taylor did not accompany her. Meanwhile, for the next three years, Taylor lived with his friend and co-pilot Ralph Couser and with his mother Ruth Brugh. After Taylor and Ursula Thiess were married on May 24, 1954 at Jackson Lake, Wyoming, with Ralph Couser and family friend Ivy Mooring in attendance, they lived in a new home on San Remo Drive in the Pacific Palisades section of Los Angeles until 1959. They then moved to their 113-acre ranch at 3099 Mandeville Canyon in the Brentwood area of Los Angeles. The family owned the ranch until 1972.

Ruth Brugh, in the meantime, regained improved health, and dressed in Hollywood fashion. In the early years she spent her time with the other members of the household, answering some 12,000 pieces of Taylor's fan mail and photo requests each week. In April 1936, Taylor staged a surprise dinner party for six people at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Hollywood on the occasion of her 49th birthday. The climax of the party was when Barbara Stanwyck helped Ruth Brugh to a wedge of cake and under it was a diamond sapphire bracelet — Taylor's gift to his mother. In 1938 he bought her a house at 1063 Selby Street in the Brentwood area of Los Angeles, where she resided until the mid-1950s when she moved to an apartment in Long Beach. In the 1960s, Taylor arranged for her to live in a nursing home in Santa Monica, where she remained until her death on December 7, 1974 at the age of 87. She was buried next to her husband's crypt in the Great Mausoleum at Forest Lawn Memorial-Park in Glendale.

Taylor's mother maintained ties with many relatives and friends in Nebraska, especially the Gage County area, and she even retained her membership in the Beatrice Women's Club until 1956. On at least 18 different occasions, Mrs. Brugh returned to the state, staying at the Paddock Hotel each time she visited Beatrice. Her first return trip was in November 1934, which included nearly a week's stay in Wilber at the home of her good friends Anthony and Rose Tyser Shimerda. According to the November 8 *Crete News*, she was a guest of Doane drama instructor Mary Ellen Inglis and the Doane Players on November 3 at a theater party at the Isis Theater in Crete. When she visited Beatrice in August 1935, October 1936, March 1937, October 1939, 1940, 1945, and 1946, May 1952 and 1953, she also took time to have lunch in Wilber with the Shimerdas.

In June/July 1936, Mrs. Brugh returned to visit Taylor's ailing grandfather Jacob A. Brugh at Holmesville, and in October 1936 attended a luncheon at the Paddock Hotel on the 17th for Eva Stanhope to honor her mother on her 80th birthday. Present for this occasion were a total of 40 close relatives and friends from the Nebraska communities of Beatrice, Ellis, Fairbury, Filley, Lincoln, Omaha, and Wilber, and the out-of-state cities of Chicago, Minneapolis, Washington, DC, and Flagler, Colorado. On the 28th she was, of course, present in Beatrice for Taylor's homecoming. In October 1937, she attended a luncheon in Beatrice in honor of her mother's 81st birthday, and also went to Fremont. In September 1938, she returned to Beatrice to attend the wedding of sister Effie Stanhope Jamison of nearby Ellis to Clayton Hill of Holton, Kansas, and in October 1939 to attend the wedding of her niece Eva Jamison to Harold Warkentin. In late September 1941, she returned for the funeral of her sister Effie.

After World War II, Ruth Brugh resumed her visits, staying in Omaha for a weekend in September 1945 and in Beatrice a month later. Her next return to Beatrice was in October 1946, in March 1949, and then again in May 1950 for the funeral of her 93-year-old mother who was buried next to the remains of her husband A. L. Stanhope at the Evergreen Home Cemetery in Beatrice. Aside from her previously mentioned visits to Beatrice in May 1952 and 1953, she made her final trip in the spring of 1957, after which she was featured in an article in the June 2 issue of the

Omaha World Herald Magazine of the Midlands.

Taylor's return trips to Nebraska

Part of Taylor's life-long attachment to Nebraska was evident by at least 19 visits, a few of which coincided with his mother's return visits, most of which involved public appearances, hunting excursions, business and sentiment.

A report of a return trip to Doane College in the spring of 1934 published in the September 1936 issue of *The Playbill* cannot be confirmed. But his surprise "homecoming" in Beatrice on October 28, 1936 most certainly can, for it happened just one day after he completed with Greta Garbo the filming of *Camille*. That day's edition of the *Beatrice Daily Sun* reported on the front page that "it was a tumultuous welcome by throngs which jammed the line of march of a long parade." Later that day, the *Lincoln Evening Journal* stated that "cars from Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and all Nebraska counties in this vicinity were parked everywhere...the crowd was estimated at around 20,000." The late William Cook Sr., a Beatrice banker, was present for the occasion, and he stated in a 1993 interview that "the parade for Taylor was one of the biggest in the history of the city." The event was also recorded in a five-page article titled "Robert Taylor's Amazing Homecoming" in the February 1937 issue of *Movie Mirror* magazine. The trip, initially intended as a quiet two-day rest with his mother and others, was expanded to a four-day visit. Local organizers were Rivoli Theater manager L.B. Sponsler and boyhood friend Arvid "Spiv" Eyth, at the time a publicist for the Beatrice Junior Chamber of Commerce.

Accompanied by MGM executive Dean Dorn and two other men, one of them "bodyguard" friend L. Bowden, Taylor arrived at the Lincoln Municipal Airport at 11:10 a.m., and as the front page October 28 article in the *Lincoln Evening Journal* reported, he was greeted by "hundreds at airport here as he alights," including a reception committee of Lincoln and Beatrice civic persons. Wearing "a tweed suit, under a gazelle leather top coat, with a beaver hat cocked at an angle," Taylor was driven to Beatrice in a gray Packard. Hung over Court Street between 5th and 6th Streets was a large banner with the words "Beatrice Welcomes You, Arlington Brugh," and he was given a ride through a roped-off section of the downtown area. Perched on the top of the back seat of a yellow car, he waved constantly and flashed a broad smile. A motorcycle police escort, an American Legion color guard and the municipal band preceded him, and his car was followed by other bands, including the Legion drum corps, the Beatrice High School Band in its orange and white uniforms, and the Doane College girls drum and bugle corps. Factory whistles blew, crowds cheered and he called out to old friends. Then the "local boy who made good" spoke to an assembly of 1,200 students at the Junior High Auditorium, which is still in use today, and the October 29 *Lincoln Evening Journal* reported "the students gave Taylor a full minute ovation which threatened to shatter the windows." He was introduced by debate coach and biology teacher H.M. Garrett, who reviewed Arlington's school accomplishments, and commented, "His desire to excel in whatever he was doing was his most outstanding characteristic during his high school days."

Later in the afternoon he was taken on a tour of the city, including a visit to his old home at 901 North 6th Street, by Eyth and friend Ed Weekes Jr. Then in the early evening he appeared before a capacity crowd at the Rivoli Theater, and was introduced by Nebraska Governor Robert L. Cochran. In the evening, he attended a reception and dance at the Paddock Hotel until well after midnight. According to the *Lincoln Evening Journal*, "the idol of Beatrice proved bashful at the reception," and it was almost 11 p.m. when, just as he entered the ballroom, the orchestra played "There Is No Place Like Nebraska." Wearing a dark blue suit with white pin stripes and blue shirt,

he decided to dance when the Eddie Jungbluth Band, with former Harmony Boys member Russ Gibson as its pianist, started with "The Waltz You Saved For Me". He selected as his first dance partner his old high school friend Catherine Heffelfinger Weekes. The other selections, wrote Lulu Mae Coe in the full-page November 1 *Sunday Journal and Star* article "He's Still Arlington to Beatrice Home Folks," were "You Are My Lucky Star," "The Cornhusker," and "The Way You Look Tonight." His only other dance partner was Mrs. Arvid Eyth. At 2:15 a.m. he phoned Vera Bascom in Lincoln and arranged for a date the following evening.

On the 29th, he had a chicken dinner with all the trimmings at the Jamison farm home near Ellis, went rabbit hunting there with first cousin Earl Jamison, bagged a rabbit with his old .410 shotgun, and was photographed afterwards. He then drove to Wilber for a supper with the Anthony Shimerdas, and in the evening met with old Doane College friends Francis Menke and Thomas Walklin at Kind's Cafe in Crete. Later that evening he met his old KMMJ girlfriend Vera Bascom at her Lincoln home at 1809 G Street, but was greeted by several members of the media, reported the October 30 *Lincoln Evening Journal*. So he took her to several Lincoln cafes, then to elude reporters and onlookers, drove to Crete for a talk in a quiet cafe until early morning.

On October 30, Taylor attended a luncheon at the Beatrice home of Dwight S. Dalbey, who was a member of the Nebraska State Legislature from 1915 to 1921, then visited Filley, his birthplace, and Holmesville, where his grandfather Jacob A. Brugh lived. Meanwhile, that afternoon's *Beatrice Daily Sun* ran a complimentary front page headline "Rapid Climb to Fame Has Not 'Gone to Head' Youthful Hollywood Star." In the evening, he attended a special dinner party in his honor at Doane College. Organized by Dean of Women Birdena Donaldson and Matron Mrs. Lynn Williams, it was held in the main dining room on campus. The list of 30 guests was comprised of former Doane Players members who were his friends, faculty members with whom he worked, and representatives of the administration and trustees, including President E.B. Dean. Afterwards, Taylor and the younger guests reminisced at the Crete apartment of Mrs. Williams, who in the November 3 issue of *The Doane Owl* was quoted as saying, "He was the same Arlington he was when he was in school."

On Saturday, October 31, he spoke in the morning to the Brier Fox Popeye Club at the Fox Theater, and was photographed at Penner's Pharmacy with Charlie Scott, who had been in charge of the soda fountain when Taylor was a youth. An enlargement of this photo is presently on display near the same fountain and lunch counter, which is now used at Wells Pharmacy, located just next door north of where Penner's once existed. It was the subject of the article "Lunch Counter Is Hub at Beatrice" published in the March 15, 1987 issue of the *Omaha World Herald*.

At noon, Taylor attended a luncheon at the Hotel Cornhusker in Lincoln with his mother, his bodyguard friend L. Bowden, Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Weekes Jr., and Mr. and Mrs. Arvid Eyth. Also at this occasion was his Doane College colleague Russ Gibson, with whom he shared the piano bench during a number. About 500 people, mostly women, jammed the dining room, the lobby, and the street nearby, and Taylor and friends escaped through the kitchen. He then watched the Nebraska-Missouri football game at Memorial Stadium, where he was the star attraction for the females, many of whom chanted, "We want Taylor. We want Taylor." A photo of him seated between Abbie Eyth and "ex-sweetheart" Catherine Heffelfinger Weekes was published by the Associated Press. That evening he attended a brief reception at the Paxton Hotel in Omaha, where he "was virtually mobbed by about 50 women," then about midnight departed with his mother by plane from the Omaha Airport. A crowd of nearly a thousand was at the Airport, according to the November 1 *Sunday World Herald*, so to avoid the people, Taylor's car drove onto the field almost to the plane in which he departed. By coincidence, Fiorello LaGuardia, Mayor of New York City,

was also present at the Airport at the time, but he received little attention from Taylor fans.

Of his first return to Nebraska after becoming famous, Taylor was quoted in the Lincoln *Nebraska State Journal* as saying, "He'd had an excellent time, enjoyed nearly every minute of his four-day stay, and liked especially his treatment at Doane College, the alma mater, Friday night." But his shy, private nature did not adjust well to publicity appearances overall and mixed feelings later emerged. A September 11, 1940 *Omaha World Herald* editorial revealed that he said of his old home state to Hollywood columnist Sheilah Graham: "I don't want to go back. The last time I went to Nebraska I felt so old. Everyone I knew was married and had children. It was all very depressing." So the editorial offered prophetic advice: "But someday, perhaps... Robert Taylor may find his thoughts turning back to the boys and girls who were friends in his youth, and who now are fellow-passengers with him on the train from Beatrice, Nebraska to eternity."

It was after World War II when Taylor returned to Nebraska, arriving in Beatrice on the afternoon of October 15, 1946 in his new twin-engine Beechcraft, which was purchased for him by MGM in lieu of a salary increase. It was piloted by Taylor himself who had earned his license in August 1941. Along with him came his co-pilot Ralph Couser, a friend from the Navy. Unlike his homecoming ten years earlier, this visit was a quiet one, and he was met at the Beatrice Airport by the Arvid Eyths and the Edgar Weekeses Jr. That evening he and Couser dined at the Paddock Hotel with Mrs. Brugh, who had been in Beatrice for a few days previously.

All three then motored to Crete to visit Doane College, and proceeded from there to Wilber for a visit with family friends Anthony and Rose Tyser Shimerda. According to the October 18, 1946 *Wilber Republican*, present also were his former Doane College drama instructor Mary Ellen Inglis-Farries, at the time Director of the Day School for the Deaf at the Wilber Public Schools, and her ten-year-old daughter Barbara.

In her February 20, 1993 letter, Barbara, now a Livermore, California resident, recounted her experience on this occasion. It was one which most women in the world could only imagine: "As we (Arlington and I) sat together on a bench or glider at the Shimerdas, I asked if I could give him a hug. 'Would you like a screen kiss?' he asked me. He put his right arm around my shoulder and leaned forward. Since I went to the movies every Saturday, I knew what to do: I bent my neck backwards and closed my eyes. Robert Taylor kissed my lips. Blood pounded in my brain — all the good stuff I had read about love and passion became my experience...It was over in a second — maybe two seconds — but hey, someone's got to be the first, and Robert Taylor was mine. On his way back to Los Angeles from Beatrice later that week, he flew over the Wilber Grade School. The noise of the plane's engine brought the sixth-grade class to the windows. Maybe he had told other kids he'd be waving from the cockpit, but this young girl believed that Robert Taylor was saluting her. He would never be 'Arlington' to me again."

The next day he had lunch in Beatrice with an old school friend Bill Davis, and took time to aid the local Community Concert Association in a promotion, and a photograph of him with president Maurine Morton was published on the 20th in the *Beatrice Daily Sun*. In Beatrice also he met Dr. Bryant Drake, then president of Doane College. According to the October 24 issue of *The Crete News*, he told Drake it made him homesick to see the familiar scenes and faces. In the evening he was a guest of the Eyth and Weekes families at the Beatrice Field Club for a dinner and reception which the two families had organized. As the Eyths' daughter Gracia, a 1950 graduate of Beatrice High and now a Lincoln resident, recalled, "It was a big event. My mother said at the time, 'Robert probably won't want this, but we'll do it anyway.' My parents were normally very protective of his visits because that's the way he was — a very private person." On the 17th, Taylor, his mother, and Couser were joined by Nina Call of Omaha, who had been Mrs. Brugh's

housekeeper in Hollywood, then they departed for California. According to the October 16th *Beatrice Daily Sun*, he not only hoped to return to Beatrice soon for a longer visit but he also stated, "Ten years is too long to be away from home."

It was, however, just a matter of days before he returned to Nebraska in the fall of 1946 for two hunting trips. Along with co-pilot Couser, financial advisor Morgan Maree, and national skeet shooting champion Alex Kerr of Hollywood, Taylor spent the weekend of October 25-27 in Ord at the invitation of Ord Airport manager Gene Barnett. Upon landing in Grand Island in the twin-engine Beechcraft, the hunting party was driven to Ord, where they stayed at the home of C.M. Gilroy. The next day, they hunted pheasants just east of Burwell, had lunch there, then hunted southeast of Ord, with Taylor bagging four pheasants for the day. That evening the group had dinner at the New Cafe in Ord, where Taylor ate a two-pound sirloin steak, his favorite food. The October 31 issue of *The Ord Quiz* reported he had spent most of his spare time sleeping as the hunters drove from field to field, but when someone joked about it, he was quoted as saying, "Why shouldn't I sleep? I have an airplane to fly around in, my wife is working, and I'm on a hunting trip." On the 27th, the group flew to Aberdeen, South Dakota for a week's stay at a hunting lodge, then traveled to Sacramento, California to hunt ducks.

His other trip was in November for duck hunting near Lisco, a town of just over 200 persons in Garden County, where he stayed at Omaha brewer Arthur Storz' famous Ducklore Lodge, located along the North Platte River six miles north of town. Owned by Storz from 1938 to 1958, the Lodge was frequented by a variety of actors, military personnel, and politicians. The lodge was the subject of features in the December 18, 1950 *Life* magazine and the November/December 1987 issues of *Nebraskaland*, a monthly published by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. On this particular trip, he was accompanied by co-pilot Couser and Hollywood actor Wallace Beery, who was an MGM contract player from 1915 to 1949 and appeared with Taylor in the 1939 movie *Stand Up And Fight*. In addition to hunting, Taylor and Beery participated in the November 11, 1946 Armistice Day celebration which attracted to Lisco some 6,000 persons from the Panhandle section of the state, and included a parade and barbecue. The November 14 *Garden County News* reported that other notables present were Dwight Griswold, Governor of Nebraska from 1941 to 1947, and General Butler B. Miltonberger, who led many Nebraska men in World War II battles against the Nazis in Europe. In the November 1987 *Nebraskaland* article, which also included photos of Taylor in a variety of settings, author Jon Farrar reported that Taylor rode a horse in the parade, and gave a short talk like the other dignitaries, but he generally avoided public attention.

His next documented visit was to Beatrice, arriving at the Airport on March 9, 1949 with his mother and with co-pilot Couser and his wife. The next day Taylor departed to visit a friend from the Navy at Mattoon, Illinois, while Mrs. Brugh remained in Beatrice for a longer stay.

There were two trips to Nebraska in 1952. While on the way from New York City to Los Angeles, Taylor and his co-pilot Couser landed the Beechcraft in Beatrice on May 14 for an overnight stop to pick up Mrs. Brugh, who had been visiting in the Beatrice area for ten days. In November, he spent two days hunting pheasants in Lincoln and Dawson Counties, arriving at the Gothenburg Airport on November 19 with co-pilot Couser and Los Angeles doctor George W. Ainlay, a brother of Mrs. Wayne Parker of Farnam, where they stayed until the 22nd. According to the November 23, 1952 *Lincoln Sunday Journal and Star*, Taylor attended a reception one evening at the Gothenburg home of Mrs. Paul Potter, daughter of Mrs. Parker. He granted interviews to journalism students at the Farnam and Gothenburg Public Schools, and shot two pheasants while a member of a hunting party comprised of men from Brady and Gothenburg.

Taylor was in Omaha on January 6-7, 1953 as part of a promotional tour for his newly completed film *Above And Beyond*, the story of Paul Tibbets, the Air Force colonel who piloted the first atomic bomb mission over Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, 1945. At a luncheon at the Blackstone Hotel on January 7th, he was presented by the Omaha-based Strategic Air Command a citation of appreciation "for emphasizing to the American public...the importance of air power in the maintenance of world peace." Among those in attendance at the ceremony were four people from Beatrice. The previous day Taylor visited at an Omaha hotel his former high school French teacher Amelia Chard, and after that was honored at a cocktail party held by Omaha brewer and friend Arthur Storz and family. In a January 7 *Omaha World Herald* article, he revealed again his dedication and perfectionism when he was quoted as saying, "You'd be surprised at the number of Hollywood actors who think they perpetually and habitually stink. The first time I see a picture I've made my reaction is invariably negative. As far as I'm concerned, there's no one else in the picture. I look only at myself. And I'm always dissatisfied."

While in Omaha that January, Taylor had a steak dinner at Ross Lorello's Steak House, and was so impressed that he commissioned Lorello to air express to Hollywood 18 well-aged sirloins, each 1 1/2 pounds in weight and two inches thick. According to a February 11 *Omaha World Herald* article, Taylor had written to Lorello, "Last nite I had three of them for a small dinner with a couple pals of mine and we all agreed that these old teeth had never sunk into a finer hunk of beef." His life-long favorite foods had been steaks and beef, a preference previously made known nationwide by Ed Sullivan's full-page article "Private Lives of Hollywood, the Robert Taylors —Very Happy Persons" published in the November 5, 1939 edition of the *Sunday World Herald*. A few months later, Taylor, sporting a moustache and curly black chin beard, returned to Nebraska, arriving in Beatrice on the afternoon of May 19, 1953 to join his mother who had been staying at the Paddock Hotel for about a month. Due to a delay in the production of *Knights of the Round Table* in England, he had flown to Chicago to meet co-pilot Ralph Couser, German actress and close friend Ursula Thiess, who became Taylor's wife a year later, and her companion Shirley Foster. All four then flew in his Beechcraft to the Beatrice Airport, where Mrs. Brugh and several friends greeted them.

During the three-day visit, he rented an automobile to take the group on a tour of the countryside, including a visit to Filley and dinner in Omaha on the evening of the 20th at Ross Lorello's Steak House. On the 21st he and Ursula drove to Wilber to lunch with Anthony and Rose Tyser Shimerda, then in the evening the entire group attended a dinner party at the Beatrice home of the Arvid Eyth family at 404 Washington.

Gracia Eyth Henkle, who attended the dinner, recalled, "Taylor was a dear friend of my father, and his dream was to come back to Beatrice and live on an acreage. He was comfortable, like an old shoe, and at the dinner gave me a kiss on the cheek. My parents were protective of his visits, and the beauty of his coming back to Nebraska was the privacy he enjoyed. He was the happiest in a pair of blue jeans and a cowboy hat, away from all the glitz and glitter. He was also devoted to his mother, and was generous to people. Unfortunately, he was a chain-smoker, and my father always worried that it would be the death of him. After he died in 1969, his wife Ursula wrote to my parents every Christmas season, and sent photographs of the children well into the 1980s."

In an August 24, 1987 *Beatrice Daily Sun* article, the handsome Arvid Eyth, then 85 years old, was the subject of an interview about his friend Robert Taylor, and fondly recalled him as "a true country gentleman... a man's man and he was a woman's man. He put this town and this state on the map." Unlike many movie actors, Taylor "didn't seek publicity and tried to stay out of the

limelight," and Eyth added, "Girls would throw themselves at his feet and nearly mob him... And mothers would've just loved to have had him for a son-in-law."

On November 22, 1958, Taylor and his co-pilot flew to Beatrice from his cabin near Buffalo, Wyoming for an informal two-day stay, during which time he visited the Robert Tyser farm at 1320 Beaver Avenue, then drove to Filley. According to the November 3 *Beatrice Daily Sun*, he "wore comfortable jeans and a plaid shirt," attire that caused a private humorous experience for Jean Warren Tyser, daughter-in-law of the Tysers and wife of Arlington Tyser, the latter a counselor at Beatrice Junior High at the time. In an August 17, 1991 interview, she remembered that when Taylor visited the farm, she noticed a man standing with his foot on the gate by the barn, talking to Robert Tyser, the operator of the farm. She said, "I recall that he, viewed from behind, had black, shiny, slick hair, and wore a leather jacket, jeans, and cowboy boots. I thought to myself, 'What's that roughneck doing here?' When he turned around, it was Robert Taylor, and that was the first time I met him."

Another humorous experience at the Tyser farm was recalled by Arlington Tyser. He remembered that when Taylor visited the farm, he would sometimes have lunch or dinner with them, as his mother Flossie Williams Tyser liked to make meals for visitors, but "sometimes her cakes were leathery or a flop." It was on one occasion in 1949, 1952, or 1953 that after Taylor informed Mrs. Tyser that he would be visiting, she made a cake. "So as soon as he arrived, he went directly into the kitchen and ate it. However, it was the bad one. Because he had remembered where everything was from visits earlier in his life, he picked up the discarded chocolate cake instead of the good one my mother had placed in another location!"

Taylor's next return to Nebraska was in early January 1963 for visits with friends in Beatrice, Filley, Fremont, Lincoln, and Wilber. In a January 13 article in the *Sunday Journal and Star*, he was quoted as telling the Anthony Shimerdas in Wilber that "he 'needed a rest' so he came back to his childhood home." According to the Shimerdas, who lunched with Taylor on the 8th, Dr. Brugh initiated young Arlington's visits to their farm near Beatrice "because he didn't want the boy to grow up knowing only sidewalks and alleys." The article concluded that "through all these years and still today, however, the Shimerdas think of Robert Taylor, or Spangler Arlington Brugh as his Nebraska birth is recorded, as 'our boy, too.'"

It is of historical interest that Rose Tyser Shimerda had a connection with another person just as famous as Taylor. That person was Willa Cather, the renowned novelist who grew up in Red Cloud, Nebraska. Rose's first cousin Robert Dvoracek of rural Saline County was married on June 23, 1924 to Antonette Pavelka, daughter of John and Anna Sadilek Pavelka of Red Cloud, who were friends of Cather. As described in a July 28, 1985 article in the *Sunday World Herald Magazine of the Midlands*, Antonette's parents served as models of the main characters in Cather's short story "Neighbor Rosicky" and in her 1918 novel *My Antonia*. Though Robert and Antonette Pavelka Dvoracek were divorced after living for a few years in Blue Hill, they had in 1925 one daughter named Mildred, who as a youth occasionally visited Tyser relatives in Wilber. (Antonette later married Emil Kort of Blue Hill.) During Cather's return trips to Nebraska, she visited the Pavelkas at their farmhouse north of Red Cloud, and on one occasion in the early 1930s, both Antonette and Mildred Dvoracek were present. Another cousin of Rose Tyser Shimerda that gained prominence was Mrs. Milo (Lillian Dvoracek) Stastny, who not only substantially funded construction of Wilber's elegant Dvoracek Memorial Library in 1968 but also left in her estate in 1986 an endowment of \$500,000 to the Library. It is not known, however, if Rose Tyser Shimerda ever discussed her Cather connection with Robert Taylor.

On this particular January 1963 trip, Taylor spent only a short time in Beatrice, and visited

with the Eyths. In his February 9 letter to Beatrice publisher Robert Marvin, who in his January 19 letter to Taylor had wondered if he was "ducking the press" for reasons of privacy on this trip, Taylor explained, "Nope — it wasn't really that I was trying to 'duck the press' at all. However, I was in Beatrice for one nite and the following day and naturally I had a lot of looking around to do. Moreover, I always hesitate to 'look up' newspaper people, even tho I might know them well, lest they might think that 'publicity', per se, was my main purpose. In my infrequent trips to Nebraska it's largely to see old friends — and old places — and publicity ain't any intentional part of it."

The following fall he returned on October 25, 1963 to help Doane College begin a development campaign to raise \$5 million. Earlier on September 30 an *Omaha World Herald* editorial had praised him for his participation, stating in part, "Mr. Taylor always has been proud of his Nebraska origin and never has hesitated to say so." Accompanied by his wife Ursula Thiess, he was engaged in a full day's activities, starting with a luncheon for him and friends who knew him. He then witnessed two one-act plays with students and parents who were on campus for Parents Day, followed by a tour of the campus and a lengthy visit with his former Doane drama instructor Mary Ellen Inglis-Farries, who had traveled to Crete as a result of Taylor's strong desire to see her.

Sometime during the day, Taylor was presented with a gift of Nebraskaland stamps by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in recognition of his contributions to the pioneer and cowboy heritage of Nebraska. The stamps were a promotion illustrating tourist attractions throughout the state, and the idea was conceived by the Information and Tourism Division of the Game and Parks Commission, reported Omaha advertising executive J. Greg Smith, an employee with the Game and Parks Commission from 1959 to 1965. He recalled that actor Henry Fonda was another recipient of Nebraskaland stamps.

At a special late-afternoon convocation to honor him, Mrs. Farries gave the main address, and Doane president Donald M. Typer presented Taylor with an honorary degree Doctor of Humane Letters. A dinner honoring him was held that evening, which served as a "kick-off" for the fundraising drive, and he reminisced with many old friends about his two years at Doane from 1929 to 1931. Overnight he and his wife stayed at the Crete home of David Osterhout, a member of the Doane Board of Trustees. The funds from this campaign resulted in the opening of Colonial Hall in 1965, Burrage Hall in 1966, and a new student center in 1967. The impetus of the campaign along with federal loans and other donor gifts led to the completion of Fuehrer Fieldhouse in 1969. Also completed was a communications building that housed a new theater, library, music rooms, and classrooms in 1970, Sheldon Hall in 1971, a doubling in size of the Perry Student Center in 1971, and the new Padour-Walker Administration Building in 1972.

On October 26, the Taylors were guests of Beatrice friends Arvid and Abbie Eyth and all of their children and spouses at the Nebraska-Colorado football game in Lincoln. In an October 27 *Sunday Journal and Star* article, Taylor said in an interview that "it's always good to be back in Nebraska. This is the first time I have seen Nebraska play at home since 1936, but I did see them in the Rose Bowl (on January 1, 1941 when Stanford was the opponent)." On their way to Wyoming, they visited for the final time the Anthony Shimerdas in Wilber. Of this three-day visit, Taylor wrote in part in his November 7 letter to Robert Marvin, "The whole damned Nebraska trip this time was a real thrill, right from the little luncheon in Crete plumb thru the game, dinner with Spiv and Abbie (Eyth), coffee and cinnamon rolls with the Shimerdas in Wilber on Sunday morning, and the drive thru the western part of the state on our way to Wyoming. I saw a lot of old friends and my only regret was that I had so little time to spend in getting reacquainted with most of them."

His next trip was on September 19-20, 1964 to Beatrice, then to Grand Island, where he

was honored by the Nebraska Broadcasters Association at their annual meeting. After arriving by plane at Omaha, he rented a car and drove to Beatrice for dinner with the Eyths on the evening of the 19th, then early on the morning of the 20th he stopped at the Robert Tyser farm for coffee and rolls before driving to Grand Island. There, he was made a lifetime member of the NBA for "Distinguished Service to the Broadcast Industry", and it was also where he began his only Nebraska business venture. According to a March 3, 1968 *Sunday World Herald Magazine of the Midlands* article, Grand Island businessman William Martin recalled Taylor's appearance at the NBA meeting, and was quoted as saying, "He mentioned that he enjoyed coming back to Nebraska and was looking for a reason to make it more often. He wanted a business interest that would be challenging and yet beneficial to people, and I told him Multi-View could be the answer." Of his Grand Island visit, Taylor reported to Robert and Flossie Tyser in his September 30, 1964 letter "the banquet was a nice affair..."

After William Martin and Richard F. Shively of Chicago, a longtime broadcaster, met with Taylor at his California home, he became an active partner in Multi-View TV, Inc. of Grand Island. Official announcement of his involvement was released on August 30, 1965. Other partners in the corporation were William Martin, president of Grand Island's radio station KMMJ, William Moore, head of a Grand Island public relations firm, Richard F. Shively of Chicago, Charles C. Bevis, a Chicagoan who served as an executive with the National Broadcasting Company for more than 20 years, and Jack B. Hopkins, president to Telesis Engineering, Inc. of Evansville, Indiana.

A two-day visit in Grand Island was made by Taylor on December 1-2, 1965 to confer with Multi-View president William Martin and vice-president William Moore. He also went to Hastings on December 2 to discuss cable television with city officials and businessmen. The following two days he, Martin, and Moore joined a hunting party at Fort Robinson near Crawford under auspices of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Taylor soon returned to Grand Island on January 11, 1966 to attend the annual banquet of the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce held at Senior High School. Before a crowd of 1,700 persons, he narrated the "Partners in Progress" presentation, and played in the North American Air Defense Command orchestra present for the event. Also present for the occasion was *Omaha World Herald* reporter and columnist Tom Allan, who in a March 3, 1993 interview remembered that while KOLN-TV of Lincoln was interviewing Taylor at the time, he was constantly interrupted by people seeking autographs. When asked by Allan, "Does it bother you?" he replied, "No, it would bother me if they didn't because that's part of being an actor."

Afterwards, Taylor was taken by a group for a reception and steak dinner at Dreisbach's Restaurant. Among those at the gathering were local businessman Richard Kinman and his wife Grace, who at midnight decided to celebrate their 23rd wedding anniversary with a kiss, a peck on the cheek. According to Allan, they were interrupted by Taylor, who in good humor said, "Oh no, Greta Garbo would have killed me with a kiss like that." So he demonstrated the proper way, making sure his nose was not in front of Mrs. Kinman's face, blocking her beautiful image from the camera. And he continued to demonstrate how he kissed other famous actresses. Mrs. Kinman, who was floating on "Cloud 9", said, "I'm not going to wash my face."

In late March 1966, Grand Island Multi-View-TV filed articles of incorporation with the Nebraska Secretary of State, and in early April, so did Kearney Multi-View-TV, with both listing Taylor as one of the incorporators.

On July 7, 1966, he again returned to Grand Island, and according to that afternoon's *Grand Island Daily Independent*, he became a member of the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce, and was quoted as saying, "This is the first time I've enrolled in any chamber of

commerce anywhere in the United States, and I'm mighty happy to be back in Grand Island." The next day he traveled to North Platte for discussion about cable television.

In 1967, Taylor returned to the state to help North Platte celebrate on February 22-23 its Centennial City designation. At the evening banquet sponsored by the North Platte Chamber of Commerce and held at Adams Junior High School were over 1,000 persons, including Governor Norbert Tiemann, who presented a plaque and the congratulations of the entire state to the citizens of the Platte Valley community for being sweepstakes winners in the annual Nebraska Community Betterment Contest. Taylor was also one of three persons to be issued honorary Cody Scout awards by North Platte Mayor Kenneth Huebner.

Following a 26-minute slide portrayal of the city's first century, Taylor narrated a musical presentation which featured "How The West Was Won" by the 90-voice North Platte High School Choir. On February 24, the *North Platte Telegraph* reported "many persons were of the opinion that last night's production was one of the outstanding productions of all time in North Platte." Over the two-day celebration, Taylor had attended other attractions such as a Buffalo Bill film at the William Cody House at Scout's Rest Ranch and a re-enactment of the take-off of the first night air mail flight, according to a February 23 *Lincoln Journal* article. The article also stated, "Taylor said he keeps personal appearances to a minimum and 'I like to know where I am going and what I am going to do beforehand!'"

Taylor's final public appearance in Nebraska was in Grand Island on January 17-18, 1968 to attend a celebration of the opening of the new Multi-View-TV operation at the time housed at 1602 West Second Street. He was accompanied by his wife Ursula. According to Tom Allan's column in the January 14, 1968 *Omaha World Herald*, company president William Martin explained, no doubt with tongue-in-cheek, how they got a firm commitment from Taylor and his wife: "He said they'd come only if we'd assure him one of those good Nebraska steaks at Dreisbach's Steak House."

During their visit, the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce presented Taylor with the "Big Wig" Award, which was given to a person who contributed most to the city the previous year. He was also interviewed by Gary Johansen and photographer George Shestak of the *Omaha World Herald* for the March 3, 1968 article "He's as Likeable as the Town Plumber" in the *Sunday World Herald Magazine of the Midlands*, and was quoted as saying after the Chamber ceremony, "I was nervous. Maybe I'll get used to these things in another 30 years." Other subjects discussed during the interview were his outdoor interests, including hunting, and as both he and his wife loved to hunt, they mentioned they would accompany a Winchester rifle team on a world tour in February.

The final visit of Robert Taylor to Nebraska soil was on April 1-2, 1968, when, he reported in his April 16 letter to the Arvid Eyths, "I rented a car at the Omaha airport — drove thru Beatrice, out on the old Holmesville road, then to Filley, and finally back to Beatrice by dark. On Tuesday morning, April 2," he further wrote, "I drove out and had some coffee with Bob and Flossie Tyser at the old farm south of town — then mobiled back to Omaha and caught a flight to Chicago." According to the June 9, 1969 *Beatrice Daily Sun*, Mrs. Tyser was quoted as saying, "At that time, he seemed to be in vigorous health, and he talked about plans for his family and for his career."

Generosity, kindnesses, and correspondence

His life-long attachment to Nebraska was demonstrated not only by his return trips but also by being generous to Nebraska relatives and friends, by support for the state from a distance, and by his correspondence.

Taylor's generosity was visible through the giving of gifts and the welcoming of relatives and old friends to his California home. According to Doane College friend Beth Naden Kellar, who believed "he was much better looking in person than in the movies," he sent a complete layette to his former Doane drama instructor Mary Ellen Inglis-Farries after she gave birth to her daughter in September 1936.

In October 1936, he took time during his Beatrice homecoming to present his grandfather Jacob A. Brugh of Holmesville \$20 in cash and \$15 in grocery credit. But in February 1937 grandfather Brugh was placed on relief rolls by Gage County officials after they learned his surviving two sons Aurthur and LeRoy, both farmers near Beatrice, and two daughters Mrs. Nancie Girl of Brownville and Mrs. Maude Persson of Oakdale could not contribute financially. Dissension occurred in the family and nationwide publicity revealed the plight of Taylor's grandfather to MGM executives who did not appreciate the negative disclosure. The February 4 *Omaha World Herald* article "Film Star Taylor Promises Aid to Take Grandfather Off Gage County Relief Rolls" reported that Taylor and his mother in Hollywood announced "we had not been advised about the present situation, but we will make sure it is not necessary for him to seek other assistance." In the February 24, 1937 *Omaha World Herald*, Gage County officials reported they took Jacob A. Brugh off relief after they learned he had received money, likely from Taylor, and left his home to live with his son LeRoy.

Doane friend Kellar, who worked in Los Angeles from 1935 to 1942, remembered a chance encounter with Taylor on January 20, 1938 at the Royal Palms Hotel in Los Angeles after she had just attended a meeting of Athena sorority — founded by Barbara Stanwyck for working girls. Her interest in Athena was reported in depth by James Reid in the article "What Every Girl Should Know" published in the October 1939 issue of *Motion Picture* magazine. As Kellar recalled, Taylor had come to get Barbara on this occasion, and was standing below the steps of the building and out of sight. But when he saw Beth leaving, he approached her, and said, "Why Beth, what are you doing here?" They then talked behind a car to avoid being noticed, and he invited her to visit his home at Tarzana, which she later did with Evelyn Hiatt, the former Doane girlfriend of Gerhart Wiebe.

When his first cousin Eva Jamison married Harold Warkentin on October 25, 1939, Taylor and his mother gave \$100 as a wedding gift, and Mrs. Brugh gave Eva her extra clothes. She also gave a reception for Eva in the evening at the Paddock Hotel, and Taylor sent his best wishes. According to Eva, her mother Effie was invited to visit Taylor's home in California after he married Stanwyck in May 1939.

Soon after World War II, high school friend Paul Drew made an impromptu visit to Taylor's home. When Paul went to the door, the housekeeper said, "Mr. Taylor's not in." Then Paul said, "I'm from Beatrice, his hometown, and I'm Paul Drew." Upon overhearing this conversation, Taylor said from inside the house, "Paul Drew, get in here!" They spent two hours visiting, and Paul recalled that the very successful actor Robert Taylor told him, "I really don't have any talent and won't last long. I'm a flash in the pan."

Others who were welcome at his home were his former Doane drama instructor Mary Ellen Inglis-Farries and her daughter Barbara, who visited Los Angeles on two occasions when he was on location filming. They were as his guests allowed on the MGM sound stages, given private tours, and allowed to eat in the commissary. And Barbara wrote in her February 20, 1993 letter: "As a youngster, now and then I would receive a gift from Hollywood: a blanket, a knit jacket and cap, a doll. Nothing extravagant — I believe they were thoughtful thank yous for my mother's single-mindedness in pushing Arlington's abilities."

The Arvid Eyths of Beatrice visited the Taylor home in California several times, the final time in 1964, and according to the 1987 interview of Eyth published in the *Beatrice Daily Sun*, once when Taylor had a new house he wanted them to be his first guests. One of Taylor's sayings was "you can't take the country out of the boy," and Eyth also remembered the horse stable on the Mandeville Canyon ranch "was so clean you could eat off the floor." Taylor also sent a leather album to Arvid's daughter Gracia for a Junior League of Omaha raffle in the fall of 1960 for their thrift store known as the "Jumble Shop." The album had originally been presented to Taylor on September 9, 1946 in appreciation of his fifth appearance on the Screen Guild Players radio program.

In the summer of 1964, when he learned that his Wilber friend Rose Tyser Shimerda was ill with cancer, he sent her a gift, and the following year after her death in July 1965 at the age of 74, he sent his sympathies to her Beatrice relatives.

In the spring of 1968, Doane College president Philip Heckman and development director Fred Thompson visited Taylor at his California home to discuss matters of mutual interest.

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 on October 18 in honor of his retirement from KMMJ after 43 continuous years in the radio industry. When Taylor was a member of The Harmony Boys at Clay Center, he knew Kister, and in his closing comments he said, in part, "I remember those days as the greatest days of my life....I know KMMJ will miss you, I know your listeners in that area of my favorite state will miss you, and the next time I get back to Grand Island I hope we can get together for a while and lie to each other a little as we've so happily done over the past 39 years. Anyhow, God Bless you George, all of us Nebraskans love you....You just be happy. This is your old friend from Clay Center, Arlington Brugh, saying over and out. Goodnight George."

Aside from visits and a variety of kindnesses, Taylor's attachment to Nebraska was evident even at a distance. In January 1948, he attended in Washington, DC a party of the Nebraska Society of Washington, where he danced, signed autographs, and according to the January 22 *Omaha World Herald*, accepted a commission as Admiral of the mythical Nebraska Navy, presented by Hugh A. Butler, a U.S. Senator from Nebraska (1941-51).

In 1951, when he wanted Nebraska steak, it was reported in the June 15 *Omaha World Herald* that he had ordered "a nonstop flight of Omaha steaks when he's in England to make *Ivanhoe*...They'll be flown over in frozen packages." This order was likely handled by Omaha Steaks International, a firm owned by the Simon family since 1917, and still engaged in the worldwide delivery of gourmet steaks from its location at 4400 South 96th Street.

In March 1965, Taylor's Codicil to his Will provided that if at the time fixed for the ending of certain trusts for his wife and his children none of them was living, then distribution was to be made to his business manager. If, however, his business manager were deceased, then distribution would have gone to Doane College, the first charity listed.

In the summer of 1966, a press account revealed that Taylor narrated a 35-minute color film on the life of Carl T. Curtis that was to be used in his campaign for re-election as U.S. Senator from Nebraska. The June 24 *Omaha World Herald* quoted Curtis' campaign chairman as saying, "Taylor volunteered his service and wasn't paid a cent" despite assertions by his political opponent. Curtis, a Republican, served the state for a total of 40 years, first as a U.S. Representative (1939-55) and as a U.S. Senator (1955-79).

In the summer of 1967, he was invited by the mayor of Beatrice to participate in the annual Homesteaders Days Parade, and would not have accepted a fee for doing it, but arrangements were

not completed to make it a reality.

Selected comments from some existing correspondence with friends also reveal his attachment to Nebraska. Though Taylor may have written letters while in high school, it is with certainty that he wrote on a regular basis to his mother while he attended Doane College. (These letters and other memorabilia were destroyed about 1945 after being stored in the Jamison farmhouse south of Ellis.) And it became a life-long activity appreciated by many. In the March 3, 1968 article in the *Sunday World Herald Magazine of the Midlands*, his wife Ursula was quoted as saying, "His hobby is writing letters. Back home, he gets up at five in the morning and tackles a pile of correspondence. I wish he would do some of mine and help me catch up."

Most, but not all, of his correspondence to Nebraskans was with the Arvid Eyths, the Robert Tysers, and publishers Earl and Robert Marvin, all of the Beatrice area, and excerpts reproduced here reveal his loyalty and deep sentiments for people and settings during his formative years. In his March 4, 1936 note to college student Delores Harmon, BHS, Class of 1936, he recalled, "Your letter brought back to my mind many happy memories of when we used to live across the street from each other on Sixth Street."

To cousin Nelda Brugh, he stated in his March 24, 1948 letter 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 6th 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."

To the Robert Tysers, owners of the old Shimerda farm where he kept his pony Gypsy, he wrote on August 1, 1949 that "it was too bad that we missed connections the last time I was in Beatrice. I probably should have called before coming out but was just driving around and thought I'd take a chance. The old place looked completely familiar and brought back many pleasant memories, believe me."

Sometimes his recollections were in error, but not by much. From his October 7, 1963 letter to the David Osterhouts of Crete, we learn he reminisced, "Staying at your home will bring back a real flood of memories. I used to be a frequent visitor there back when I was in Doane. I knew Ruth (Osterhout, a 1927 Doane graduate who lived at 1120 East 13th Street) very well and our Drama Club often did some rehearsing of small scenes in your living room." In reality, the David Osterhout home was nearby at 1310 East 13th. And when he wrote to Robert Marvin on April 17, 1964, he remembered, "Your reference to Lucille Lang in your April 24 column took me back a long time...I first met Lucille when we were literally 'babies' and we lived across the street from the Langs on North 6th Street when we moved to that address in 1921 (it was actually 1924)." He then revealed another means of attachment to his roots when he added, "Subscribing to the *Sun* was certainly one of the best investments I've ever made, Bob. I assure you I read it much more carefully than I do our local *Los Angeles Times* — and the pleasure I derive from it is considerable."

Taylor's memory of details is revealed in other letters. On June 14, 1964, he wrote to the Robert Tysers, "Your mention of 'haying' and 'corn cultivating' surely reminds me of all those happy days, back when I was only 8 years old and carrying water to the men on the threshing crews." And to Robert Marvin he wrote on June 26, "As I remember I thought that Wally Robertson was one of the nicest men I'd ever known, too. Maybe because I was, and always will be I guess, a 'nut' over automobiles; he was kind of a 'hero' to me because he always drove the latest, biggest, and best cars available in those days. During one period he had a huge Lincoln touring car which he let me drive out to Filley one day to visit my Grandparents. Flying the X-15 (an

experimental high performance airplane in the 1960s) couldn't be a bigger thrill to a modern teenager than driving that car was to me."

His high regard for his education in Beatrice was clearly stated in his May 10, 1965 letter to the Robert Tysers. "Not too long ago I noticed, in the *Daily Sun*, that Arlington (Tyser) was to be the new Principal of the Junior High School. You may tell him that I, as the first Student Body President which that school ever had way, way back when it was built (1925), shall hold him responsible for maintaining its standing. All these years later I still feel a great love, not only for the Junior High but the Senior High as well. However, I guess the Junior High is about the only school still standing in Beatrice which I attended."

It was to Arlington Tyser that many persons relayed knowledge of Taylor's kindnesses and letters, and he recalled that when Linnea Peterson retired in May 1963 after 38 years of teaching, Taylor sent her a congratulatory note. She had been a Spanish teacher when Taylor attended Beatrice High School and was one of the faculty sponsors of the *Homesteader* staff when he worked on the annual during the 12th grade.

In the summer of 1966, national gossip columnist Walter Winchell reported that Taylor was interested in running for political office, perhaps on the basis of Taylor's narration of U.S. Senator Curtis' life story for use in his re-election campaign that year. But in Taylor's September 4, 1966 letter to Robert Marvin, he dispelled it as just a rumor. "I feel safe in assuring you that I have no ambitions, present or future, in that particular direction..Perhaps my experiences as the first elected student body president of the then-new Beatrice Junior High have something to do with my present feelings. I shall never forget the fears that overcame me every time I had to preside over a 'meeting' in that auditorium or introduce speakers. Nothing since has frightened me as much...Mind you, I see no reason why actors shouldn't go into politics. I seems to me that honesty, intelligence, a firm belief that America is one of the finest countries in the world and that our political philosophy is the best in the world should be all the requirements that anyone should need. I believe that we need fewer *professional* 'politicians' and more just plain *good people* in politics."

In September 1967, *Nebraskaland Afield*, which each fall throughout most of the 1960s was a special hunting tabloid distributed nationwide by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, published in its "Speak Up" section a letter from Taylor. In it he expressed several life-long conclusions about hunting and the state in general: "My hunting days in Nebraska started back around 1923. I was a comparative small-fry then — and my Dad started me out on rabbits, with a .22 rifle or a .410 gauge shotgun. It didn't really matter too much what I was shooting with, or what I was shooting at, as long as I was with 'my Dad.' He was quite a guy!"

"Things have changed since those boyhood days back in the 20s. Rabbits are still there, I assume — but the 'bird' population has really exploded; the deer population, too. Over the past several years I have had some of the best bird shooting I've ever had in my entire life right 'back home' in Nebraska. And I look forward to it every year. Sometimes it doesn't happen that I can get there. But you can bet I am always trying."

"And it isn't entirely because I like to shoot birds. 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. And you lucky Nebraskans who are still living there just believe me. I've been a lot of places, and I have met a lot of people, and I still say Nebraskaland has the best hunting and the best people in the whole country. I'll be there this coming fall if I can possibly make it."

Even to the end his attachment to his roots was clear. In a March 7, 1968 note to the Robert Tysers, he stated, "There is also a possibility that I'll be back in Nebraska early in April and I hope

to get to Beatrice. If so, I'll call and drop out to see you, if only for a cup of coffee and a drive around the old farm which I loved so very much." And over a year later, on Monday, June 9, 1969, a day after his death, the *Beatrice Daily Sun* published under a photo of Taylor, his wife Ursula, and his daughter Tessa a caption that stated in part: "Only last Thursday, Mr. Eyth received a letter from Robert Taylor, who said he'd lost 30 pounds but was looking forward to recovery and another visit by the Eyths." His last letters to the Eyths were dated February and April 1969.

The untimely death of Robert Taylor

Taylor died of lung cancer at St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica, California on Sunday, June 8, 1969, at the comparatively young age of 57. Biographer Wayne reported in *Robert Taylor* that he had concern sometime years earlier about his right lung because x-rays showed an enlargement of a boyhood spot first detected by doctors in 1962. Despite increasing tiredness, he refused to see doctors about it, and until his surgery in October 1968, he did not quit smoking, a habit he acquired sometime after leaving Nebraska in 1931. Not only did his close friend Arvid Eyth express concern about his heavy smoking but even actress Ava Gardner noticed it during their brief love affair in 1948. In her 1990 autobiography *My Story* published by Bantam Books, she wrote, "I especially remember that though I smoked cigarettes, Bob Taylor left me miles behind. He was completely addicted: fifty to seventy a day before the cocktail hour, and God knows how many after that, and he carried around this big thermos of black coffee, even keeping it in his car. Cigarettes and coffee kept him going all day long."

Gardner also paid tribute to Taylor the man and the movie star, as she also wrote, in part, "There is no rhyme or reason about a love affair. I was in constant proximity to some of the most handsome, romantic figures on earth, but they didn't move me the slightest bit. Bob Taylor surely fit the bill for me, and I did the same for Bob. He was married to Barbara Stanwyck at the time, but the marriage had been on the rocks for a long time and was soon to end in divorce. I knew him as a warm, generous, intelligent human being...Our love affair lasted three, maybe four months. A magical little interlude. We hurt no one because no one knew. I've never forgotten those few hidden months. I made two more films with Bob, but we never renewed our romance. And Bob, despite all his efforts, couldn't break the mold of the beautiful lover. The film world remembers him that way, and I have to say that I do, too."

On June 9, his obituary was published not only on the front page of the major Nebraska newspapers but also on the front page of nationwide dailies, including *The New York Times*, "an honor only a few movie stars ever receive," stated biographer Wayne. While the *Times'* movie critics were not often generous to Taylor in their movie reviews, its lengthy June 9th piece did state, "Despite a shock of black, wavy hair, complete with an eye-catching widow's peak, a trim 6-foot frame and classically handsome features that verged on prettiness and often overshadowed his roles, he was a painstaking professional, if unspectacular, artisan quietly dedicated to his work." And it quoted Richard Thorpe, who directed Taylor in six films at MGM, as saying, "He was a no-nonsense, untemperamental actor who efficiently and quickly learned his lines. 'Bob is really a nice guy,' he said, 'and it really comes through on screen.'"

Funeral services were held at 11:30 a.m. on June 11 at the Church of the Reconciliation at Forest Lawn Memorial-Park in Glendale. Reverend Gary Demarest presided, and Ronald Reagan, as noted earlier, delivered the eulogy, the complete text of which is published in Wayne's biography. Pallbearers were producer Hal Bartlett; Morgan Maree, Taylor's business manager; Don Milo, one of Taylor's movie stand-ins; George Nichols, publicist; Tom Purvis, a

close friend from Bradenton, Florida; Art Reeves, Taylor's ranch manager; actor Dale Robertson; and producer Robert Stabler. According to an Associated Press news story the next day, a crowd of about 400 mourners attended, some were curiosity seekers, others were stars such as actresses Barbara Stanwyck, Taylor's former wife, Virginia Grey, Rhonda Fleming and Eva Marie Saint, actors Van Heflin, Walter Pidgeon, Robert Stack and Keenan Wynn, and Senator George Murphy, a former MGM actor. None of Taylor's close Nebraska friends or relatives was present.

There were commentaries in Nebraska that eulogized Taylor, and two of them published several years apart in the *Beatrice Daily Sun* perhaps captured the essence of Taylor the man. On June 10, 1969, publisher and former schoolmate Robert S. Marvin wrote, in part, that "he was a shy man of simple, genuine humility, a quality that first struck me in the fall of 1936 just after he had zoomed to stardom in *Magnificent Obsession*. His old hometown put on a grand homecoming for him, with parade, reception, banquet and all the rest. He and I were in his room at the Paddock, where I was interviewing him for the paper. After I had all the data I needed, we visited for a long time, and he confided (as I remember his words): 'I know this may be just a flash in the pan (referring to his instant stardom). For some reason or other, my looks caught on but that can't carry you far. I don't know much about acting — I realize that better than anyone. But I'm going to work hard at it and before the bloom wears off maybe I can learn the business and make a career of it. If I don't, so what? I'll go back to school and get my medical degree as I'd planned to in the first place.'" And later in the same editorial, Marvin concluded, "Wealth and fame never threw a barrier between him and the friends of his boyhood days, whom he seemed to hold in fonder affection because he saw them so seldom."

Eighteen years later in the August 30, 1987 *Beatrice Daily Sun*, the distinguished Charles Thone, a former U.S. Congressman (1971-79) and Governor of Nebraska (1979-83), wrote, in part, as a follow-up to the previous August 24 published interview of Arvid Eyth: "In the 60s, I was attorney for the Nebraska Broadcasters Association, and I had the great pleasure to sort of host Robert Taylor before and after he appeared at an NBA Convention (in Grand Island on September 20, 1964)...Yes, Robert was all that Arvid Eyth said of him in your story, and more. He was the kindest, most thoughtful, least pretentious superstar I have ever been around. He traveled alone. He made his own travel arrangements. He stayed in a regular single hotel room — never seeking or expecting special treatment. He made me feel as if I were the most important person in Nebraska — and he had that natural touch with all of our Broadcasters. His remarks before our group were unprepared, but simply electrifying. My, did he have natural talent. He never charged us a dime, saying it was his pleasure to be back in Nebraska...The only other Hollywood personalities that I personally had contact with over the years who came close to Robert Taylor as 'nice people' were Bob Hope, Lawrence Welk and Ronald Reagan. They, by the way, were all good friends."

Taylor's body was cremated, and the urn is entombed in a crypt in the "Court of Freedom" section located on a hill in Forest Lawn Memorial-Park at 1712 South Glendale Avenue in Glendale. Among other notables laid to rest in the same cemetery are Walt Disney, Errol Flynn, Clark Gable, Jean Harlow, Alan Ladd, Carole Lombard, Jeanette MacDonald and David Selznick. As stated previously, Taylor's mother and father are also buried in Forest Lawn in the Great Mausoleum located in the "Sanctuary of Consolation" section.

Established in 1906 as the first of the five Forest Lawn Memorial Parks in California, the Glendale Park is renowned for its beauty and its art collections. Its founder Hubert Eaton is quoted in the 1992 *Visitors Map & Guide* as saying it was created as "a great park, devoid of

misshapen monuments and other customary signs of earthly death, but filled with towering trees, sweeping lawns, splashing fountains, beautiful statuary and...memorial architecture." Annually over one million people visit the grounds, which are open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The value of the estate left behind by Taylor was estimated at about \$1 million, with half allocated for his 45-year-old widow Ursula, including support for 25-year-old stepdaughter Manuela Thiess and his mother Ruth Stanhope Brugh, at the time residing in a Santa Monica Nursing Home, and the other half allocated for the support and college education of his two children, 13-year-old Terence and 9-year-old Tessa. Additionally, Taylor's longtime friend Dr. Ivy Mooring was designated to serve as Godmother for Terence and the Ronald Reagans as Godparents for Tessa in the event of a tragedy to the mother.

Aftermath and surviving relatives

The surviving members of his immediate family remained in Los Angeles, and continued to live on the Mandeville Canyon ranch until it was sold in 1973. They then moved to a home in the Bel-Air area.

Ursula raised the children, and in 1974 was remarried to Marshall Schacker, an international film distributor for an Australian firm based in Beverly Hills. In 1986, he also died of cancer. Recently she completed her memoirs, a 450-page as-yet-unpublished manuscript titled "*but I have promises to keep.*" After her birth on May 15, 1924 in Hamburg, Germany, where her father Walter Schmidt was manager of a print shop, she led a normal childhood until 1939, when the authorities of the Third Reich drafted her for one year as a farm laborer. Then she returned to Hamburg, where she pursued her dream of acting, began a stage career and adopted the name Ursula Schmidt-Huth, and lived throughout World War II. In 1942, she married movie producer George O. Thiess, and in July 1943 gave birth to daughter Manuela and in June 1945 to son Michael. Two years later the marriage ended in divorce.

In 1948, she started her modeling activity in Munich, and in 1951 was invited to the United States with a movie contract offer by RKO Pictures. In 1952, she met Robert Taylor on a blind date in Hollywood, and they were married two years later. There are several movie credits. In 1953, she appeared with George Nader in *Monsoon*, in 1954 with Robert Stack in *The Iron Glove* (later renamed *The Kiss and The Sword*) and with Rock Hudson in *Bengal Brigade*, in 1955 with Glenn Ford in *The Americano*, in 1956 with Robert Mitchum in *Bandido*, and from 1959 to 1962 occasionally with her husband Robert Taylor in his television series *The Detectives*.

Presently, Ursula Schacker is engaged in volunteer work in the Children's Hospital at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), and is in the process of locating a publisher for her book, an autobiography that includes much information about her happy relationship with Robert Taylor. She resides in the Bel-Air area of Los Angeles.

Meanwhile, the children have become very successful in a variety of creative occupations and activities. Manuela Thiess, whose father was George Thiess, was born in Hamburg on July 19, 1943 and came to the United States in 1953. In the early 1960s, she was married to Hal Baum for two years, then worked as a model and actress before continuing her formal education in poetry, play writing, and teaching. In 1984, she received her master's degree from the Monterey Institute of International Studies, and now teaches English as a second language at Salinas High School in Salinas, California. Manuela also continues to read, write, and paint, concentrating presently on oils, pastels and acrylics, and she sells her paintings to interested buyers.

Terence (Terry) Taylor was born June 18, 1955 in Santa Monica, California, and graduated in 1973 from Pacific Palisades High School in Pacific Palisades, California. He then attended Santa Monica College, Immaculate Heart College, and the University of California at Los Angeles, majoring in music. After a variety of early occupational experiences, Terry has for the past 13 years been engaged in cable television programming with Showtime and pay-per-view cable television with Request and Viewer's Choice in Los Angeles. Currently he is Vice President of Affiliate Relations, Western Region, for Viewer's Choice. In 1985, he married Josefa (Joey) Maria Dubois, and they live in the Mar Vista area of West Los Angeles. His hobbies include poetry, biking, golf, and snow and water skiing.

The member of the family that has most closely followed in the footsteps of the father and mother is Tessa Taylor, who was born August 16, 1959, attended John Thomas Dye Elementary School, and graduated in 1977 from Westlake High School in Los Angeles. She then received her bachelor's degree in cultural anthropology from UCLA in 1984. In the early 1980s, she was a print and fashion model with two different agencies, and also published reviews in two publications. At the same time, her film experience was extensive, including positions as assistant producer of *The Tracker*, a 15-minute documentary for Western Outdoorsman shown by NBC in January 1981; as researcher for *People of the Waterfall*, a 15-minute documentary filmed in England and India for Alan Landesburg Productions (and included meeting with President Indira Gandhi, other officials, and academics); and as associate producer of *Kasantzakis*, a 30-minute documentary filmed in Greece and narrated by actor George Peppard. It was telecast nationally by the Public Broadcasting System and was winner of the "Best of West Award" for best production in 1983.

Tessa was married for three years to Michael Tobias, and for her wedding in 1983, Mrs. Ronald Reagan, our nation's First Lady, was the Godmother. Since 1986 she has pursued a career in acting, appearing in commercials for Cadillac, BMW, Paine Webber, American Express, Pacific Bell, Sprint, and Southern California Edison. To date, her travel hobby has taken her to much of the United States and to the foreign countries of Austria, England, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Mexico and Switzerland.

In addition to his wife, son, daughter, and step-daughter, there are many close relatives that survive Robert Taylor nationwide. Included are 14 first cousins, 61 first cousins once removed, and 126 first cousins twice removed. Of these 201 cousins, 53 presently reside in Nebraska, at least 17 of which continue to live in Gage County. Also surviving, of course, are many more distant cousins around the nation.

The legacy

But aside from Taylor's worldwide fame and large number of relatives, what else did he leave behind?

The vast majority of his 80 television and motion picture films have been preserved by Turner Entertainment Company of Los Angeles, which recently acquired the rights to MGM films and still photographs. His films are shown on Ted Turner-owned television stations in Atlanta, Georgia nationwide and indeed worldwide via satellite technology. Many of the MGM movies and their scripts are being preserved in the Cinema TV Library and Archives at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Files of photos and other materials pertaining to all movie stars are housed at the Margaret Herrick Library at the Center for Motion Picture Study at 333 South La Cienega Boulevard in Beverly Hills, California.

Many libraries nationwide house Hollywood biographer Jane Ellen Wayne's *Robert*

Taylor, at present the first full-length history of his life, and her *Stanwyck*, an account of the life of Taylor's first wife. Also available is Lawrence Quirk's pictorial biography entitled *The Films of Robert Taylor*. Eventually the autobiography of Taylor's second wife Ursula Thiess will be available.

Statewide, several libraries have shelved Wayne's biography of Taylor and house vertical files containing a variety of information. At the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) at 1500 R Street in Lincoln, persons may view microfilm of the *Beatrice Daily Sun* and all other Nebraska newspapers. They may purchase from the NSHS Photographic Division over 50 photos related to Taylor's life in Nebraska — the photos are part of the Kral Picture Collection. There are also newspaper clippings files at the Library of the Lincoln Journal-Star Printing Company at 9th & P Streets in Lincoln, and at the Douglas County Historical Society at 30th & Fort Streets in Omaha. Copies of Wayne's *Robert Taylor* may be purchased at the Nebraska Bookstore at 13th & Q Streets in Lincoln.

Locally, the Gage County Historical Society at 2nd & Court Streets in Beatrice has a display on Taylor. The museum also houses newspaper clippings and other items on Taylor, makes available copies of Wayne's biography on Taylor, offers copies of this article for \$3.00 (mailing and handling included), and holds an annual Robert Taylor Film Festival each March. The Beatrice Public Library at 16th & Court has microfilm of the *Daily Sun* and other information in its Archive Room. And efforts are underway to explore ways to honor Taylor's contributions to Nebraska. One such effort being made is a Robert Taylor Seminar to be held in Beatrice on October 1-2, 1994. Persons wishing more information about this forthcoming event may contact Kent Wilson, Director of the Gage County Historical Society. The mailing address is Box 793, Beatrice, Nebraska 68310. His phone number is (402) 228-1679.

Perhaps another part of Taylor's legacy — in addition to his family and his film artifacts — is in the realm of the abstract. He set a high standard of decency for the way people, including celebrities, ought to behave. And then there is the knowledge that the values, attitudes and opportunities that nurtured his self-development during his formative years in Nebraska were reaffirmed, that is, his success elsewhere was an affirmation of what he could take with him from Gage County and Nebraska overall. Yes, Taylor inherited certain abilities and characteristics that explain a large part of his success and he regarded MGM executive Louis B. Mayer as a father-figure. But he clearly acknowledged through his actions the life-long contributions many individuals and institutions made during his pre-Hollywood years from 1911 to 1934.

Certainly his talent in drama and music, his intellectual abilities, his physical appearance and capabilities, and his birth into a family that could not only appreciate but afford cultural development beyond the norm for his rural environment were chance events. Perhaps, too, he was born to be polite, shy, considerate, sensitive, perfectionist, serious, private, trustworthy, etc. Or maybe these traits were partly modeled after those of his parents who had much to do with the formation of his values and attitudes. After all, it was they who fostered respect for authority, responsible independence, decency, generosity, reliability, humanness, regard for achievement, willingness to expand horizons, happiness in excellence, humility, gentleness, loyalty, joy for the outdoors, work habits, and an "earn what you get" attitude.

There is no question that his parents provided opportunities for self development, success, education, and expansion of interests, perspectives, and career options. They encouraged him to share his father's osteopathic experiences, to assume responsibilities at

home, to be exposed to a variety of adults, to know and love the outdoors, to engage in the world of work, to participate in community cultural activities, to excel in activities, to own a car when most boys his age couldn't and to take cello lessons from a gifted teacher 40 miles away. They also encouraged Taylor to attend college, to arrange for his best friend to attend the same college, to transfer to Pomona College upon Professor Gray's suggestion, and to complete his formal education in the face of enticements from Hollywood. And in the aftermath of his beloved father's death, the mother moved to Hollywood so he would pursue his acting interest.

Even before his parents were born, there was a desire for advancement on both the Stanhope and Brugh sides of the family. They both had a history of relocating westward from the east, and both sides were among the early pioneers of Nebraska. His father as a youth chose to remain in Fremont rather than follow the family when it relocated from the Wahoo area to a farm in eastern Colorado. Then after he farmed in Gage County for a few years, the father changed careers twice. After his marriage to Ruth Stanhope, he quit farming and became a businessman. After doctors could not cure his wife's ailment, he entered college at the age of 26, determined to learn what members of the medical profession seemingly did not know. And he not only chose the little-known, little-respected field of osteopathy but he also had to attend a college out-of-state during days of difficult transportation. Then during his sixteen-year practice in Beatrice, he changed the perception of many skeptics of osteopathy, earning the high regard of his medical colleagues and the people in the community.

His mother was also courageous and possessor of a vision. While she was ailing, she was a reader and supportive of her husband's goals, moving as many times as her husband. After giving birth to Arlington, her only child, an event considered miraculous in view of her delicate health, she was shrewd about her protectiveness. A homebody and a small-town girl with a farm background, she did not seem very sophisticated to outsiders, and she did not conform to others' expectations of a doctor's wife, likely she knew that she was considered "different", and fit in better with people of a rural background. But she took the lead in the education and acculturation of her beloved son, and saw to it that his intellectual and "softer" sides were developed, believing that he should not conform to pressures to participate in sports and instead concentrate on the blossoming of his many talents. It is likely that she knew Arlington was someone very unusual, quietly made decisions for him and with him, and wanted him to go far in life, even if it meant leaving his roots.

Both of Robert Taylor's parents wanted him to someday be great at something while at the same time remaining a moral, decent person. And they had help in their efforts from the community of Beatrice in the 1920s because it offered many opportunities for exposure to the fine arts and for "home talent" to gain valuable experience before live audiences. Some of the fine arts opportunities Beatrice offered were: a number of movie theaters in the city (and the live orchestral music played before silent films), the holding of the annual Venetian Festival on the Big Blue River, the revival of the Chautauqua and the opening of the rebuilt Paddock Hotel. Other opportunities included the importance of music in the community's churches, the improvement of the school system's facilities and curriculum, the talk of Doane College relocating to Beatrice, and the proximity of colleges in Crete and Lincoln. Beatrice was a fertile environment for a budding performing artist. B.P. Osborn, music supervisor of the Beatrice Public Schools, played a role by encouraging Arlington to take up a stringed instrument, and mortician Frank Lenhart made a contribution by voluntarily organizing his orchestra for the youth of the community. Knowing Arvid Eyth likely gave inspiration, too,

and the knowledge of Burchard native Harold Lloyd's early film success might have had a subconscious effect. Then, too, one cannot overlook the subtle influence that his best friend Gerhart Wiebe had as well as that of his many other acquaintances, both male and female, especially those in drama and music.

As has been noted previously, Taylor was grateful to the institutions of Beatrice and their contributions to his success. The community of Gage County also provided values and work ethics that correlated well with what his parents wanted for him, and his constant praise for his home and for all of Nebraska was also confirmation of their worth to him. Perhaps he never gave it much thought, but the affection shown to him during his 1936 homecoming and the size of the turnout were rare events in any celebrity's lifetime. Few in any endeavor have ever experienced that kind of "welcome home", at least not as an individual. And it is significant that on his final trip to Nebraska he visited Beatrice, Filley, and Holmesville without fanfare, and the last friends that he saw on Nebraska soil were the Robert Tysers at the farm he loved so much.

Taylor's many valuable fine arts experiences while at Doane College in Crete and the two summers at radio station KMMJ in Clay Center were also significant factors in his development. Extremely important were the contributions of Doane's part-time instrumental music instructor Herbert E. Gray and drama instructor Mary Ellen Inglis-Farries. His placement of Doane College as the first charity in the Codicil to his Will — in addition to serving in a fundraising capacity — also give testimony to the role his two college years in Crete played in the development of his career.

So what may one say in conclusion about Robert Taylor, a golden-era Hollywood movie king from Nebraska? He was one of the great Hollywood stars, one of the handsomest men in America, and a model of decency. Moreover, he was married to Barbara Stanwyck, one of the very successful actresses during her era, and he and Ursula Thiess, his second wife, were one of the most attractive, glamorous couples anywhere. He was also one of the nicest persons who ever lived.

Unfortunately, as was observed by the author of "Robert Taylor, the man behind the 'slick pan'" published in the April 1961 issue of *Coronet*, he was — and is — "probably the least known of the big stars."

Robert Taylor: Glamorous movie star of Hollywood's golden era, role model of decency and world patriot

Copyright (C) 2009 by E.A. Kral

Original full-page profile published in *The Crete News*, April 1, 2009, p. B-12

One of Hollywood's most glamorous movie stars in history was Nebraska native Robert Taylor, who appeared in over 80 motion picture and television films from 1934 to 1969. Known for his leading roles opposite many of the most renowned actresses in show business, including Joan Crawford, Greta Garbo, Katharine Hepburn, Vivien Leigh, Elizabeth Taylor, and Lana Turner, he also starred from 1959 to 1962 in his own television series *The Detectives*.

And he was not only narrator of two Academy Award-winning documentaries but also co-recipient with Alan Ladd of the Golden Globe for 1953 as world's male film favorite, the same year Marilyn Monroe was world's female film favorite.

Within three years after signing a contract as a professional actor, he had risen to stardom and achieved high Box Office rankings, prompting the *London Observer* to assert that "1936 will go on record as the year of Edward VIII, the Spanish War, and Robert Taylor." And the January 18, 1937 *Time* magazine called him "cinema's most passionately admired matinee idol since the late Rudolph Valentino."

In January 1937, he and actress Jean Harlow attended the birthday celebration of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and by year's end, Taylor placed second to legendary Clark Gable in a "King of Hollywood" poll. The February 19, 1938 issue of *Saturday Evening Post* featured a Norman Rockwell cover illustration that showed two college girls admiring a photograph of Taylor, the same year Edgar Guest's poem "Valentine" closed with a reference to him.

Despite his success and worldwide fame at 25 years of age and beyond, Taylor remained a unique individual in the entertainment industry, for he had kept his character traits and values from his formative years in Gage County, Nebraska, where he was born Spangler Arlington Brugh on August 5, 1911 in Filley, a village of 194 persons. An only child, he grew up in nearby Beatrice, population 9,664, where his father was an osteopath. His mother suffered from occasional illness, but his parents' relationship based on mutual love and respect set a lasting example for Arlington, or Arly, as he was known.

The family belonged to the Centenary United Methodist Church, though Arlington also joined the Order of DeMolay, a nonsectarian group that promotes moral teachings. His work ethic and responsibility were also fostered by parental discipline, home chores, and summer jobs. For almost ten years, he kept his pony at the Anthony and Rose Tyser Shimerda farm on the south edge of the city, where the Brughs sometimes stayed in a cabin, hunted, and fished.

In the Beatrice Public Schools, he had normal playground experiences, but also spent time at his father's medical office, and read books at home. At the age of ten, he started piano lessons, and music supervisor B. P. Osborn convinced him "the cello was the instrument for a

gentleman.” His mother arranged for his traveling 40 miles to Lincoln for private cello lessons with Herbert E. Gray from 1925 to 1929.

While participating in school music activities and a community orchestra, he appeared before various groups after election as the first student body president in Junior High. In dramatics class, he had important roles in two productions, and took part in a play staged by adults in the community. At the annual state drama contest, he was state champion in the oratorical category, and locally excelled in academics. Upon graduation from Beatrice High School in 1929, Arlington attended Doane College at Crete, about 33 miles from home.

During his two years at Doane, he registered with the Department of Music, where Gray was a part-time teacher, and played the cello in a string quartet and the orchestra. After becoming part of a trio called “The Harmony Boys”, he performed in the summers of 1930 and 1931 at radio station KMMJ in Clay Center, located 65 miles west of Crete.

While regarding dramatics as a hobby, he played various roles in several plays directed by speech instructor Mary Ellen Inglis, who he later complimented for the part she had in starting him toward his career. Despite advantages other Doane students did not have, Arlington maintained a conservative lifestyle, was well-liked, and remained in close contact with his parents. More about his formative years may be found in a 48-page supplement published with the October 8, 1993 *Beatrice Daily Sun* and a cover article in *Nebraska History*, Vol 75 (Winter 1994).

When Herbert Gray decided to fill a teaching vacancy at Pomona College in Claremont, California in the fall of 1931, Arlington also transferred to Pomona, and prepared for a business career. Notable participation in college plays at Pomona included his December 1932 role in R. C. Sheriff’s World War I drama *Journey’s End*, which was observed by Ben Piazza, a talent scout for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studio. It resulted in his dramatic instruction from MGM coach Oliver Hindsell before earning a bachelor’s degree in June 1933.

After his father had unexpectedly died in October 1933, Arlington and his mother settled in Hollywood, where he re-enrolled in the MGM dramatic school, and on February 6, 1934 signed a contract with MGM for \$35 per week, which made him the lowest-paid actor in Hollywood history, where he remained for 25 years, longer than any other star at any Hollywood studio. He was also given the name Robert Taylor to increase his general appeal to more Americans.

It was Taylor’s good fortune to work for MGM, which became the most renowned of eight major motion picture companies in Hollywood, making well over 1,000 films during the golden era from about 1925 to 1960. According to John D. Eames, author of *The MGM Story*, 2nd Rev Ed (Crown, 1982), the studio in Culver City “grew from its original 22 acres to more than 275, with its own police force, fire department, and post office.”

Under Louis B. Mayer, its chief executive from 1924 to 1951, the vision of MGM movies not only offered escape from such hardships as the economic depression of the 1930s and the World War II years but also clean, wholesome entertainment with respect for family values.

During this era, too, the enforcement of the Production Code after June 1934 helped define what was morally acceptable content for United States motion pictures. Peter Hay, author of *MGM: When The Lion Roars* (Turner, 1991), reported that production standards were partly due to an increase in sex and sensationalism in the movies of the 1920s and the formation of the Roman Catholic church's Legion of Decency for the purpose of rating films.

Taylor's career began when "motion pictures were the leading mass entertainment... but the mounting rivalry of radio had to be met by making pictures bigger," reported Eames. So MGM, known for developing a star system as well as quality and glamour, followed the motto "make it good...make it big... give it class!" By the mid-1930s, it had about 4,000 employees, and made an average of 40 to 50 films a year. And some of its productions over the decades such as *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz* and *An American in Paris* and *Singin' in the Rain* and *Ben Hur* became enduring classics.

MGM was also famous for its stable of stars, often proclaiming it had "more stars than there are in heaven." By its 25th anniversary in 1949, it had included in various movies some 80 stars and featured players, many of whom were the biggest in Hollywood history, such as Joan Crawford, Greta Garbo, Judy Garland, Katharine Hepburn, Clark Gable, Mickey Rooney, Spencer Tracy, and Taylor.

Several were featured in Hollywood biographer Jane Ellen Wayne's *The Golden Girls of MGM* (Carroll and Graf, 2003) and *The Leading Men of MGM* (Carroll and Graf, 2005), the latter including a chapter on Taylor. Also author of *The Life of Robert Taylor* (Warner, 1973; Robson, 1987; St. Martin's Press, 1989), the first book-length biography of him, Wayne eventually used the subtitle "the man with the perfect face."

Taylor had minor roles until 1935 when he gained attention for his performance in *Society Doctor*, then achieved stardom almost overnight upon playing opposite Irene Dunne in the Universal Studio production *Magnificent Obsession* that same year. He had leading roles in four succeeding MGM films in 1936, the same year the studio arranged his homecoming celebration in Beatrice on October 28, which attracted an estimated 20,000 people from Nebraska and surrounding states, and was reported by the national press.

One of his most notable performances occurred in the poignant MGM romance *Camille*, released in 1937, in which he played opposite the legendary Greta Garbo, who received an Oscar nomination for her part. According to author Wayne, one reviewer wrote, in part, "Mr. Taylor, inexperienced, is good. His Armand is dashing and well-tempered and his love scenes are certainly making the pulses beat more quickly."

Appearing in so many tender love stories, however, created a stereotype, and he had grown irritated with ridicule from some male members of the press as well as the mob-like behavior of fans. And Mayer decided to attract a larger portion of males by giving Taylor more "he-man" roles. In 1938, he was the star of the first American film made in England. In *A Yank at Oxford*, he played a conceited American student at a British university, inspiring one reviewer to assert that "he runs, rows and throws a mean right with scarcely a trace of the posturing

matinee idol.” Others noticed his hairy chest, which sparked talk about a fashion trend.

That year he also appeared as a boxer in *The Crowd Roars* after previously taking some sparring lessons from Nebraska-born Max Baer, who was the heavyweight boxing champion of the world in 1934. Wayne quoted a reviewer as stating, “One of the greatest prize fight pictures ever to hit the screen puts Taylor in the fore. As a human hero, he takes his place with Gable among the screen greats.” Indeed, his Box Office ranking was fourth in 1936, third in 1937, and sixth in 1938.

Among Taylor’s 1939 films was *Lady of the Tropics* in which he starred opposite Hedy Lamarr, forming what some critics consider the most glamorous couple in any Hollywood movie ever. A year later, after playing a young, unpopular Navy officer who gained respect from the squadron upon rescuing their commander in the drama *Flight Command*, he learned to fly airplanes in his private life.

In 1940, he was involved in not only one of his most notable performances but also his own favorite film. In the sensitive romance *Waterloo Bridge*, he played a World War I Army officer who falls in love with a ballerina played by Vivien Leigh, who had previously won an Oscar for her role in the classic *Gone with the Wind*. Author Wayne quoted a critic who believed that *Waterloo Bridge* has solid acting throughout, and Eames reported it was one of MGM’s major successes that year.

His first Western came in the title role of the 1941 technicolor *Billy the Kid*, which some authors consider the best of all versions made of this film. And he strengthened his reputation as an action star. A year later, he played opposite the photogenic Lana Turner in the title role of *Johnny Eager*, a cruel and ruthless gangster who is killed by his enemies at the end. In this melodrama, which is one of Taylor’s notable films, co-cast member Van Heflin won an Oscar as best supporting actor for 1942.

In the 1943 war movie *Bataan*, he played a tough sergeant of a diverse group of American soldiers who lose their lives on a desperate mission against the Japanese. Eames considered it the best of that year’s battle movies. And Lawrence J. Quirk, author of *The Films of Robert Taylor* (Citadel Press, 1975), asserted that it was “one film that many Robert Taylor fans felt should have earned an Academy Award nomination.”

While serving in the U.S. Navy for the next two years during World War II, he was considered too old for overseas duty, despite holding a civilian pilot’s license, so as an instructor he made 17 training films and narrated an Academy Award-winning feature-length documentary about an aircraft carrier titled *The Fighting Lady*, released in early 1945.

His postwar years with MGM resumed at a slower pace, though in 1946 he appeared in the suspense-filled melodrama *Undercurrent* with co-star Katharine Hepburn, who reported that “Robert Taylor was a highly underrated actor with a much bigger talent than suspected.” He also narrated the Academy Award-winning documentary about the 1946-47 expedition to Antarctica by Admiral Richard E. Byrd titled *The Secret Land*, released in 1948.

In the decade of the 1950s, however, he appeared in 22 movies released while under

contract with MGM, some of which rated as top ten grossing films, especially those in which he had leading roles as medieval heroes.

The 1951 *Quo Vadis?* was a costume spectacular that became the most expensive movie produced up to that time (\$7 million versus \$4 million for the 1939 classic *Gone with the Wind*). Filmed in Rome, it starred Deborah Kerr opposite Taylor, and grossed over \$12 million with popularity on television afterwards. According to Hay, it received eight Oscar nominations,

The 1952 *Ivanhoe* with Elizabeth Taylor and the 1954 *Knights of the Round Table* with Ava Gardner were top grossing films. The 1954 *Valley of the Kings* with Eleanor Parker, the first American movie made in Egypt, led one critic to comment that “Taylor has a role with a bit of meat on it.” And the 1955 *Quentin Durward* with Kay Kendall was considered by Quirk as a fine representative of the medieval costume melodrama that garnered more attention on television in the mid-1970s.

Taylor’s performance in *The Hunt* in 1956 with Debra Paget made it his most notable Western, which Quirk called a landmark film because “it demonstrated what he could accomplish with the right juxtaposition of elements.” And Wayne quoted one reviewer as stating that it “is an unusual Western because its characters have some depth—Taylor plays his role well as the—not so much villain—but as a psychopath.”

The best performance of his career, according to various critics and authors, occurred in the 1953 *Above and Beyond* with Eleanor Parker, a semi-documentary of Paul Tibbets, the airman in charge of dropping the first atomic bomb on Japan in 1945, which prompted an end to World War II. And many believed he should have received an Oscar nomination if not the award. Author Wayne also reported he had volunteered to promote this movie for MGM, even though he usually disliked public appearances, and became the first Hollywood contract player to appear on television when a guest on Ed Sullivan’s *Toast of the Town*.

Upon leaving MGM in 1958, he spent the next decade performing in about a dozen independent films and on television. From 1959 to 1962, he starred in his own weekly television series *The Detectives*, and from 1966 to 1968 was host and occasional star for the syndicated weekly *Death Valley Days*.

Both Wayne and Quirk reported that he had refused some scripts because he had believed he was too old for the roles and he did not want to play opposite a woman who was—or looked—twenty years younger.

Throughout his career, he was also appreciated by well-informed members of the film industry. From a Joe Hyams article about Taylor in the April 6, 1957 *New York Herald Tribune*, author Wayne quoted producer Edwin Knopf as saying, in part, that “he’s a fine artist, a non-sense guy who studies his script more thoroughly than any actor I know.” In agreement was director Richard Thorpe, who added, “He’s a rarity. A lot of the big stars are really heels off screen ... But Bob is really a nice guy and it comes through on the screen.”

Taylor himself revealed another side of his uniqueness to Hyams in the comment: “Acting is the easiest job in the world, and I’m the luckiest guy. All I have to do is be at the

studio on time, and know my lines. The wardrobe department tells me what to wear, the assistant director tells me where to go, and the director tells me what to do. What could be easier?"

An astute summarization of his character came in a simple quote from a Utah farmer who had talked with Taylor while on location: "That's one man who never grewed himself an ego!"

As for his private life, he avoided the limelight and admitted he was not very gregarious. His first marriage in 1939 to actress Barbara Stanwyck, a Brooklyn, New York native who had an adopted son from her previous marriage to an abusive husband, ended in divorce 12 years later. They had no children. As reported by Jane Ellen Wayne's *The Life and Loves of Barbara Stanwyck* (JR Books Ltd, 2009), she had a distinguished career with a 1982 Oscar for lifetime achievement. But they spent time apart due to their filming locations, and she was not enamored with his flying and outdoor interests. Her only visit to his home state was on April 28, 1939 to attend the premiere of her movie *Union Pacific* in Omaha.

His limited political activity began with the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, founded in 1944 by film colony conservatives worried about Communist influence, and with the Screen Actors Guild. As suspected by national leaders, a variety of individuals in the film industry had succumbed to Communist influence, reported Kenneth Lloyd Billingsley, *Hollywood Party* (Forum/Prima, 1998, 2000) and Ronald Radosh and Allis Radosh, *Red Star over Hollywood* (Encounter Books, 2006).

Though Taylor became unhappy with the House Un-American Activities Committee in May 1947 after investigators unexpectedly revealed his private testimony to the media, reported Linda J. Alexander in *Reluctant Witness: Robert Taylor, Hollywood and Communism* (Tease, 2008), he and several others cooperated in HUAC's public hearings on Communism at Washington, DC that October.

Seemingly unaware that Soviet dictator Josef Stalin had murdered millions of his own people, according to historian Robert Conquest in 1968 and others thereafter, some liberals in the industry protested what they deemed as abuses, and victimized cooperative witnesses until well beyond the collapse of Communism in Europe and Russia itself by the early 1990s.

In the late 1940s, Taylor had become acquainted with British-born Ivy Ellis Pearson Mooring, who had brought her son and husband to America. He set her up in his home free of charge for five years, enabling Ivy to earn a living to pay for the health care of her husband who had a malignant tumor. After that, she remained a close family friend.

His second marriage in 1954 to German-born actress Ursula Schmidt Thiess fulfilled his desire for a family, serving as a father to her two children from a previous marriage as well as two of their own—Terry and Tessa. Much is described in Ursula Thiess' privately published autobiography in 2003 titled "... *but I have promises to keep*": *my life before, with & after Robert Taylor*, as he took pride in caring for his family and their 113-acre ranch in the San Fernando Valley near Los Angeles, where he kept some farm animals. As he had done since 1946, he flew to hunting and fishing locations in the West, including Nebraska, where he visited occasionally and had a business interest. He exchanged letters with old friends, too.

In 1966, some California Republican Party members invited Taylor to run for governor, reported Alexander, but he didn't want the job. Instead, his close friend Ronald Reagan ran, and later became the 40th U.S. President.

Robert Taylor died of lung cancer at the age of 57 on June 8, 1969, and in the funeral eulogy delivered by Governor Reagan, he was called "one of the truly great and most enduring stars in the golden era of Hollywood." Indeed, his movies are in the MGM film library purchased in 1985 by Ted Turner for viewing on television.

While his star was placed on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1960 at 1500 Vine Street, and Doane College awarded him an honorary doctorate in 1963, there were forms of posthumous recognition, such as the 1970 induction into the Cowboy Hall of Fame at Oklahoma City, and an imprint of his 1943 role in *Bataan* on a postage stamp issued in 1991 by Comoro Islands near Africa.

In 1994, the Nebraska State Highway Commission designated the portion of U.S. Highway 136 between Filley and Beatrice as the Robert Taylor Memorial Highway, and in the mid-1990s there was creation of a permanent exhibit on him at the Gage County Museum in Beatrice as well as the holding of two national conferences in the community. In May 2007, the first annual Robert Taylor Scholarship was awarded to a graduating senior at Beatrice High School.

The previously cited biographical sources by Wayne, Quirk, Alexander, and others are suggested as well as the obituary that began on the front page of the June 9, 1969 *New York Times*. And the fourth book-length biography of him, scheduled to be published about 2010 by Charles Tranberg, is titled *Robert Taylor: The Last Movie Star*.

For more information, consult "900 Famous Nebraskans" on the Internet at www.nsea.org or www.gagecountymuseum.org or www.nebpress.com.

May 2009 update of 12 pages by E.A. Kral for Gage County Historical Society, Beatrice, Nebraska

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RECOGNITION OF ROBERT TAYLOR (1911 - 1969)

Professional

1. Appeared in 80 motion picture and television films from 1934 to 1969.
2. Starred in his own television series *The Detectives*, a half-hour weekly from 1959 to 1961, and an hour weekly in 1961-62.
3. Hosted and occasionally starred in *Death Valley Days* from 1966 to 1968.
4. Appeared in many dramatizations broadcast on radio in 1930's and 1940's.
5. Holds Hollywood record for lowest contract salary (\$35 a week in 1934).
6. Holds Hollywood record for longest contract with one studio (MGM) 24-25 years from early 1934 to late 1958.
7. Ranked fourth in Box Office appeal in 1936.
8. Ranked third in Box Office appeal in 1937.
9. Ranked sixth in Box Office appeal in 1938. Taylor ranked 8th as the biggest box office star of the decade of the 1930's, according to polls published in the trade journal *Motion Picture Herald*. See Richard Griffith, *The Movie Stars* (Doubleday, 1970) page 458.
10. First American actor to appear in film made in England — *A Yank at Oxford* (1938).
11. Narrator of Academy Award full-length documentary *The Fighting Lady* in 1944.
12. Narrator of Academy Award full-length documentary *The Secret Land* in 1948.
13. Played lead role in *Quo Vadis?* (1951), the most expensive movie produced at the time — \$7 million. (In 1939, *Gone with the Wind* cost \$4 million).
14. First Hollywood contract star to appear on television in 1952 on the Ed Sullivan Show with film clips from *Above and Beyond* (1953).
15. First American actor to appear in film made in Egypt — *Valley of the Kings* (1954)
16. In 1954 at the 11th annual Golden Globe Awards Ceremony, he was co-recipient with Alan Ladd of a Golden Globe Award for 1953 achievements as world's male film favorite, an honor bestowed by the Hollywood Foreign Press Correspondents Association representing 500 million movie goers worldwide. (The recipient that year as world's female film favorite was Marilyn Monroe.)
17. As male lead he played opposite such leading ladies Greta Garbo, Elizabeth Taylor, Lana Turner Ava Gardner, Katharine Hepburn, Barbara Stanwyck, Joan Crawford, Vivien Leigh, Joan Fontaine, Jean Harlow, Eleanor Parker, Irene Dunne, and others.

International and National Recognition

18. Stated the *London Observer*: "1936 will go on record as the year of Edward VIII, the Spanish War, and Robert Taylor."
19. In 1936 he placed first in a nationwide poll of girls from ages 16 to 20 according to *Ladies Home Journal*, September 1936.
20. Named in the January 18, 1937 *Time* cinema section as "cinema's most passionately admired matinee idol since the late Rudolph Valentino."

21. Taylor's full-page photo appeared for tobacco advertisement on back cover of November 22, 1937 *Life* magazine.
22. In 1937, he placed second to Clark Gable in "King of Hollywood" poll.
23. His photograph admired by two college girls appeared on cover illustration by Norman Rockwell in February 19, 1938 issue of *Saturday Evening Post*.
24. Had footprints, handprints, and autograph placed in cement in forecourt of Mann's Chinese Theater in Hollywood in 1941, one of only 170 persons so recognized.
25. On front cover of *Life*, February 14, 1944, his imprinted autograph appeared, along with that of several other movie stars, as shown on a Hollywood restaurant Wall of Fame.
26. Included in *Earl Blackwell's Celebrity Register*, Vols 1-2 (1959, 1963).
27. Made cover of *Parade* September 25, 1960 with his wife Ursula Thiess.
28. Was one of the original 1,558 performing artists to have a star placed on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on February 8, 1960. Taylor's star is located at 1500 Vine, and is in the vicinity of Washington Mutual Bank (formerly the Bank of America). The Hollywood Walk of Fame's star-studded sidewalks stretch for 18 blocks (east-west) along both sides of Hollywood Boulevard, from Gower Street (on the north-south) along Vine Street, beginning at Sunset Boulevard (on the south), crossing Hollywood Boulevard, up to Yucca Street (on the north).

Posthumous International and National Recognition

29. Obituary appeared on page 1 of June 9, 1969 *New York Times*, a rare occurrence for a movie star.
30. Funeral eulogy delivered by Ronald Reagan, then Governor of California, later President of the United States from 1981 to 1989. Taylor and Reagan were close friends for many years, and the Reagans served as godparents to Taylor's children.
31. Inducted in 1970 into the Hall of Great Western Performers by the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, at the time the sixth to be so honored since its first inductee Tom Mix, his boyhood idol.
32. Subject of first book-length biography by Jane Ellen Wayne, *The Life of Robert Taylor* (Warner, 1973; Robson, 1987; St. Martin's Press, 1989).
33. Subject of second book-length biography by Lawrence J. Quirk, *The Films of Robert Taylor* (Citadel Press, 1975).
34. In the five-volume series *Magill's American Film Guide* (1983), which includes reviews of the 1,000 best movies, entries of seven movies in which Taylor starred appear: *Magnificent Obsession* (1935), *Camille* (1937), *Three Comrades* (1938), *Waterloo Bridge* (1940), *Johnny Eager* (1942), *Quo Vadis* (1951), and *Ivanhoe* (1952).
35. Featured in biography by Jane Ellen Wayne, *Stanwyck* (St. Martin's Press, 1986).
36. The Lion's Building on Lorimar Telepictures Lot (formerly the Publicity/Casting/Administration Building on the MGM Studio Lot) at 10202 West Washington Boulevard in Culver City, California was renamed in March 1988 the Robert Taylor Building, "honoring what many consider to be one of the most professional, consummate actors of our time." (Since then, the building was renamed, then razed. The former MGM Lot is now owned by Sony Corporation.)
37. Included in the authoritative *Dictionary of American Biography*, Supplement Eight (Scribner's, 1988), pages 645-647. First published in 1928, this series of 28 volumes,

- including Supplement Eight which covers distinguished persons who died from 1965 to 1970, contains sketches of 18,110 individuals who made major professional or artistic contributions, 48 of them born in Nebraska.
38. Eulogy delivered by Ronald Reagan at Robert Taylor's funeral on June 11, 1969 was published in Ronald Reagan, *Speaking My Mind: Selected Speeches* (Simon & Schuster, 1989) pages 46-50.
 39. Reprint of Edgar Guest's 1938 poem "Valentine", which mentions Robert Taylor, appeared in *Ideals*, Vol 47, No 1 (February 1990), page 31. Guest's poem was originally published in his *All In A Lifetime* (Reilly & Lee Company, 1938).
 40. Included in the scholarly *International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers: Actors and Actresses*, Vol. 3, rev ed (St. James Press, 1992), pages 963-964. This reference contains 635 entries selected by North American, British, and West European film scholars and critics.
 41. In 1991, an imprint of Taylor in his 1943 role in *Bataan* appeared on postage stamp issued by Comoro Islands located near southeast coast of Africa. (See Harrold C. Shiffler, editor, *Theatre Philatelic*, American Topical Association, 1994.)
 42. Biographical tribute titled "And Then I Remember Robert Taylor" by Hollywood producer Andrew J. Fenady published in *Trail Dust*, Vol 3, No 2 (Summer-Fall, 1995) pages 14-15
 43. In 1996, he was honored with a U.S. Postal Service cachet and cancellation in Beatrice during the second Robert Taylor Seminar.
 44. Listed as a famous Nebraskan in the state entry in the 1997 *World Almanac*, page 668.
 45. Included in James E. Wise Jr. and Anne Collier Rehill, *Stars in Blue: Movie Actors in America's Sea Service* (Naval Institute Press, 1997) pages 245-250 and photo on book cover.
 46. Included in authoritative *American National Biography*, Vol 21 (Oxford University Press, 1999), pages 404-405.
 47. Featured as Star of the Month on Turner Classic Movies Channel in September 2001.
 48. Photo of former Robert Taylor home (from 1959 to 1969) at 3099 Mandeville Canyon Road in Los Angeles published on occasion of sale to new owners in *People*, January 14, 2002, page 20.
 49. The movie *Camille* 1937, starring Robert Taylor and Greta Garbo, was selected as the 33rd best romance by the American Film Institute in June 2002 as part of its ranking of top 100 U.S. screen romances. Consult *Omaha World Herald*, June 12, 2002.
 50. Featured in Ursula Thiess, "...but I have promises to keep": my life before, with & after Robert Taylor (Creative Arts Book Company, 2003) Part II, pages 59-212.
 51. Entry of 500 words included in *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, ed. David J. Wishart (University of Nebraska Press, 2004) page 279.
 52. Featured in Jane Ellen Wayne, *The Golden Guys of MGM* (Robson, 2004) Chapter 5.
 53. Mentioned in entry on Barbara Stanwyck published in *Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary Completing the Twentieth Century* (Belknap, 2004) pages 609-611.
 54. Featured in American version of Jane Ellen Wayne's Robson 2004 book under new title *The Leading Men of MGM* (Carroll & Graf, 2005) ISBN 0-7867-1475-1 and recognized at top of copyright page with author's dedication "To Robert Taylor, in remembrance".
 55. Announcement of Robert Taylor Scholarship placed on Internet in spring of 2006 by author Linda J. Alexander of Frederick, Maryland.

56. Included in *Leading Men: The 50 Most Unforgettable Actors of The Studio Era* (Chronicle Books, 2006) pages 200-203. Other native Nebraskans included are Fred Astaire, Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, Henry Fonda, and Harold Lloyd.
57. Subject of third book-length biography by Linda J. Alexander, *Reluctant Witness: Robert Taylor, Hollywood, and Communism* (Tease Publishing, 2008).
58. Featured in biography by Jane Ellen Wayne, *The Life and Loves of Barbara Stanwyck* (JR Books, 2009).
59. Subject of fourth book-length biography by Charles Tranberg, *Robert Taylor: The Last Movie Star* (forthcoming).

Personal Accomplishments

60. Placed first in state oratorical contest held at Nebraska Wesleyan in Lincoln as a senior at Beatrice High School.
61. Graduated from Beatrice High School in 1929, was one of three gold medal finalists, and was one of ten members of the National Honor Society.
62. Attended Doane College in Crete from 1929 to 1931, participating in several dramatic productions, playing the cello in a string quartet, and performing at KMMJ in Clay Center in the summers of 1930 and 1931 as a member of "The Harmony Boys".
63. Played from time to time in the Lincoln Symphony from 1929 to 1931.
64. Graduated from Pomona College in Claremont, California in 1933.
65. Received in the 1930's as a member of the Order of DeMolay in Beatrice and in Lincoln the Legion of Honor, the top honor given by the national organization known at the time as the Grand Council of the Order of DeMolay.
66. Featured in September 1936 issue of *The Playbill* as member of Alpha Psi Omega, a national dramatic fraternity.
67. Published article "Anything Can Happen In Hollywood," *Ladies Home Journal*, September, 1936.
68. Published nationwide his autobiography in early 1937 which appeared in Lincoln *Nebraska State Journal*, March 1 to March 9.
69. Was married to actress Barbara Stanwyck from 1939 to 1951, herself a distinguished actress who appeared in 88 films and in 1982 was a recipient of an Academy Award for lifetime achievement.
70. In 1940, Taylor earned his pilot's license.
71. He served in the U.S. Navy as a flight instructor from 1943 to 1945, earning the rank of lieutenant and narrating 17 training films.
72. Testified on October 22, 1947 in Washington, DC before the House Un-American Activities Committee regarding Communist influence in Hollywood.
73. Received Outdoorsman of the Year Award for 1954 from Winchester Repeating Arms Company of New Haven, Connecticut.
74. Married actress Ursula Schmidt Thiess (German-born) in 1954. She was on the cover of the June 4, 1951 *Life* magazine. Taylor was one of four Nebraska-born men to marry a *Life* cover girl. (The others were Henry Fonda, Leland Hayward, and Charles Lowe.)
75. Father of son Terence born in 1955 who is now a consultant based in Philadelphia, and of daughter Tessa born in 1959 who is now an actress in Los Angeles.
76. Served as pallbearer for funeral of Clark Gable in November 1960.

77. His lifelong hobbies included hunting, fishing, flying, and writing letters.

Nebraska Recognition

78. Honored in homecoming celebration in Beatrice on October 28, 1936 and a parade attended by an estimated 20,000 persons.
79. Participated in Armistice Day parade in Lisco in 1946 with actor Wallace Beery.
80. Designated Admiral in mythical Nebraska Navy in January 1948 and presented by U.S. Senator from Nebraska Hugh Butler in Washington, DC at a Nebraska Society of Washington function,
81. Appeared on cover of July 15, 1951 issue of *Omaha World Herald Magazine*.
82. Received citation of appreciation from Omaha-based Strategic Air Command in January 1953.
83. Recognized during Nebraska's territorial centennial in 1954 by being included among 35 Nebraska natives honored with a chapter in J.R. Johnson's *Representative Nebraskans* (Lincoln: Johnsen Publishing Company, 1954), pp. 177-181.
84. Awarded honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Doane College in Crete in October 1963.
85. Awarded a gift of Nebraskaland stamps by Information and Tourism Division of Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in October 1963 for his contributions to the pioneer and cowboy heritage of Nebraska.
86. Honored by Nebraska Broadcasters Association in September 1964 in Grand Island.
87. Received honorary Cody Scout Award from City of North Platte as part of its Centennial City designation celebration in February 1967.
88. Presented "Big Wig" Award by Grand Island Chamber of Commerce in January 1968 for his contributions as a founding partner in Multi-View-TV Cable Company and for being a member of the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce and its promotions.

Posthumous Nebraska Recognition

89. Mentioned in Beatrice entry of Gage County section in *Nebraska Our Towns...East Southeast* (Second Century Publications, 1992) pages 45-48.
90. A Robert Taylor Film Festival, initiated in 1992 by Dr. C.T. Frerichs, was held periodically by the Gage County Historical Society. At its Museum in Beatrice is a permanent display on Taylor. The Society also placed commemorative plaques on Taylor's three former homes in Beatrice, and a plaque was also placed on the Bank of Filley in Filley to commemorate Taylor's birthplace.
91. Subject of biographical feature by E.A. Kral published in the October 8, 1993 *Beatrice Daily Sun*, a 48-page tabloid-size supplement.
92. Mentioned in Beatrice High School entry of Gage County section in *Pages of History—Nebraska High Schools Present and Past—Public and Private 1854-1994* (Nebraska High School Historical Society, 1994) page 337.
93. Robert Taylor Memorial Highway, the twelve-mile section of U.S. Highway 136 between Beatrice and Filley, officially designated by the Nebraska State Highway Commission and approved by Governor Benjamin Nelson in May 1994. Dedication made on October 2, 1994. The idea for honoring Taylor in this manner (or other forms of recognition) was

- initially proposed by author Jane Ellen Wayne of New York City during her visit with Mayor David Maurstad on September 18, 1992 at the Beatrice Public Library. See article in *Beatrice Daily Sun*, September 19, 1992, pp. A-1, A-2.
94. A nationwide Robert Taylor Seminar was held in Beatrice from September 30 to October 2, 1994 on the 60th anniversary of Taylor's entry into Hollywood movies. It was sponsored by the Gage County Historical Society, the Beatrice Public Library, and the Beatrice Public Schools. Featured banquet speaker was Taylor biographer Jane Ellen Wayne of Wilmington, North Carolina. See *Beatrice Daily Sun*, October 3, 1994, pp. A-1, A-2.
 95. Cover article in *Nebraska History*, Vol 75, No 4, Winter 1994, pages 280-291.
 96. Picture postcard of Taylor 1936 photo published by Gage County Historical Society in March 1995.
 97. Robert Taylor Memorial Scholarship initiated by Doane College, April 1995. To date, not funded.
 98. Included in the Internet entry "Famous Nebraska Entertainers" by the Division of Travel and Tourism, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, July 1995.
 99. Robert Taylor Scholarship Endowment initiated on June 6, 1995 by E. A. Kral with secretary-treasurer Christopher J. Nelson of Beatrice Educational Foundation. See announcement in *BEF 1995 Annual Report*, p. 4 and *Beatrice Daily Sun*, November 22, 1995, p. A-1.
 100. In April 1996, the official highway map for Nebraska included a section honoring the commemorative highways designated for distinguished persons, including the Robert Taylor Memorial Highway.
 101. Taylor was nominated for inclusion in the Nebraska Hall of Fame on September 4, 1996 by E. A. Kral and State Senator David I. Maurstad at a meeting of the Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission. Nomination booklet remains on file at the Nebraska State Historical Society in Lincoln.
 102. A second nationwide Robert Taylor Seminar was held in Beatrice from October 4 to October 6, 1996. It was sponsored by the Beatrice Public Library, the Gage County Historical Society and the Beatrice Public Schools. Featured banquet speaker was author Linda J. Alexander of Frederick, Maryland.
 103. Permanent exhibit on Robert Taylor initiated at Gage County Historical Society Museum in Beatrice in October 1996.
 104. Historical preservation plaques placed on three existing houses where Robert Taylor (as Spangler Arlington Brugh) lived—922 North 9th, 812 High, and 901 North 6th in Beatrice—and on the existing bank at Filley by the Gage County Historical Society in October 1996.
 105. Listed as a prominent Nebraskan in the 1996-97 edition and the 1998-99 edition of *Nebraska Blue Book*, biennial publication of the Clerk of the Nebraska State Legislature.
 106. Inducted into the Beatrice High School Hall of Fame on May 17, 1997 as one of the original four honorees. A 1929 graduate of Beatrice High known as Spangler Arlington Brugh, Taylor was nominated by David I. Maurstad. Announcement of induction was published in the *Beatrice Daily Sun*, May 19, 1997, pages A-1, A-2.
 107. Listed among noted southeastern Nebraskans in Bill Sesow and Susan Wunder, *Journey Through Nebraska* (Lincoln: Instructional Materials Council, 1997), page 214, a text intended for middle school students.

108. Featured in Jane Ellen Wayne, “Robert Taylor: The Movie Star Whose Spirit Never Left Nebraska,” *Nebraska Life*, Summer 1998, pages 24-29.
109. About 4,000 sheets of clippings, newspaper and magazine articles, and research notes donated by E. A. Kral on December 11, 2001 to Gage County Historical Society are housed at the Gage County Museum in Beatrice. Photographs of Taylor during his Nebraska and Hollywood years are housed in the Kral Photo Collection RG 0813 at the Nebraska State Historical Society in Lincoln—about 105 photos related to Taylor may be found between K90-567 to K90-707.
110. Entry included in Internet document “The Famous People of Gage County” created by Gage County Historical Society in Beatrice, Nebraska in Spring 2003 and available on its website.
111. Included in E. A. Kral’s “300 Famous Nebraskans” available on the website of the Nebraska State Education Association beginning in February 2000 (see *NSEA Voice*, February 2000, pages 12-13 for announcement) and on the website of the Nebraska Press Association in April 2001. Included in E.A. Kral’s “700 Famous Nebraskans” available on websites of Nebraska State Education Association, the Nebraska Press Association, and the Gage County Historical Society Museum in September 2003. Included in Kral’s expanded version titled *900 Famous Nebraskans* in July 2008.
112. Two-page profile titled “The Man With The Perfect Face: Robert Taylor” published in *Beatrice and Gage County Tourism Brochure* for 2004 on pages 14-15.
113. His photograph being admired by two college girls originally included on Norman Rockwell cover illustration in the February 19, 1938 *Saturday Evening Post* was reprinted—by permission of Curtis Publishing of Indianapolis, Indiana, copyright 1938—for month of January in 2005 calendar distributed by Nebraska banks, including Farmers & Merchants Bank based at Milford.
114. His 1940 movie *Waterloo Bridge* was included in *Curator’s Choice*, a film series presented by the Nebraska State Historical Society in Lincoln on February 6, 2005.
115. Mentioned along with the display of photo in sections titled “Interesting Facts and People” and “Gage County Historical Society & Museum” included in 62-page *Southeast Nebraska Visitor’s Guide*, 17th edition, 2005, pages. 4, 19. It is a publication of the Southeast Nebraska Tourism Council, coordinated by Shellyn Sands of Beatrice/Gage County Visitors Bureau.
116. Minimum endowment principal of \$50,000 reached for Robert Taylor Scholarship with the Beatrice Educational Foundation in spring of 2006. Copies of scholarship agreement dated March 28, 2006 are housed with BEF and with Robert Taylor Collection at Gage County Historical Society Museum. For the history of fundraising, see *Beatrice Daily Sun*, October 31, 2005, p. A-4 and February 23, 2006, p. D-5. For names of donors, the largest being Ivy Mooring, see *Beatrice Daily Sun*, June 10, 2006, pp. A-1, A-2.
117. Featured on a card (the Jack of Hearts) in a deck of playing cards offering 54 unique photos of Beatrice published by Gage County Historical Society in recognition of the 150th anniversary of the city of Beatrice in 2007. His photo was one of four published on cover of box of playing cards.
118. First recipient of Robert Taylor Scholarship, comprised of interest income from the principal of the endowment, was Natasha Trauernicht, a graduating senior of Beatrice High School, Class of 2007. See article in *Beatrice Daily Sun*, April 25, 2007, p A-2 and May 8,

- 2007 p. B-3 and *Omaha World Herald*, May 14, 2007, p. B-3. Also see *BEF Annual Report* published each November for names of subsequent recipients.
119. A 15-page booklet titled *Robert Taylor's Life Story in His Own Words 1937* (Gage County Historical Society, May 2008), a reprint of Taylor's autobiography that appeared in the *Lincoln Journal* and other newspapers on March 1, March 2, March 3, March 4, March 5, March 6, March 7, 1937 with permission by family of Robert Taylor granted in May 2008.
 120. Original makeup case of Robert Taylor donated to Gage County Historical Society in Beatrice by family of Robert Taylor in June 2008. See *Beatrice Daily Sun*, June 7, 2008, p. A-3.
 121. Book-signing held by author Linda J. Alexander at Lincoln, Beatrice, and Filley in June 2008. See articles in *Omaha Sunday World Herald*, June 1, 2008, p. E-6 and *Lincoln Journal Star*, June 8, 2008, pp. C-1, C-2 and *Beatrice Daily Sun*, June 9, 2008, p. A-1.
 122. Included on postcard featuring village of Filley during its 125th anniversary celebration on June 7, 2008. On back of postcard that featured aerial view of the town on the front was mention of Taylor that stated: "Birthplace of Robert Taylor, a movie star of the 30s, 40s, & 50s." Celebration was organized by Dave Norton and Susan Robinson.
 123. Featured in profile by E. A. Kral, "Robert Taylor: Glamorous movie star of Hollywood's golden era, role model of decency, and world patriot," *The Crete News*, April 1, 2009, p. B-12.
 124. Internet text version of E. A. Kral publications, including 48-page supplement with October 8, 1993 *Beatrice Daily Sun*, accomplishments of Robert Taylor on national and state levels, and profile in April 1, 2009 *Crete News*, placed on website of Gage County Historical Society in Summer 2009.
 125. Profile of Robert Taylor included in E. A. Kral and Jean M. Sanders, *Nationally Distinguished Nebraskans: 40 Profiles* (Gage County Historical Society, forthcoming).

**MOTION PICTURE APPEARANCES OF ROBERT TAYLOR
AND YEAR OF RELEASE**

1934

Handy Andy — Fox
There's Always Tomorrow — Universal
A Wicked Woman — MGM

1935

Buried Loot — MGM
Society Doctor — MGM
West Point Of The Air — MGM
Times Square Lady — MGM
Murder In The Fleet — MGM
Broadway Melody of 1936 — MGM
Magnificent Obsession — Universal

1936

Small Town Girl — MGM
Private Number — 20th Century-Fox
His Brother's Wife — MGM
The Gorgeous Hussy — MGM

1937

Camille — MGM
Personal Property — MGM
This Is My Affair — 20th Century-Fox
Broadway Melody of 1938 — MGM
Lest We Forget — MGM

1938

A Yank At Oxford — MGM
Three Comrades — MGM
The Crowd Roars — MGM

1939

Stand Up And Fight — MGM
Lucky Night — MGM
Lady Of The Tropics — MGM
Remember? — MGM

1940

Flight Command — MGM
Waterloo Bridge — MGM
Escape — MGM

1941

Billy The Kid — MGM
When Ladies Meet — MGM

1942

Johnny Eager — MGM
Her Cardboard Lover — MGM

1943

Stand By For Action — MGM
Bataan — MGM
The Youngest Profession — MGM

1944

Song Of Russia — MGM

1945

*The Fighting Lady — 20th Century-Fox
and U.S. Navy

1946

Undercurrent — MGM

1947

The High Wall — MGM

1948

*The Secret Land — MGM and U.S. Navy

1949

The Bribe — MGM

1950

Ambush — MGM
Conspirator — MGM
Devil's Doorway — MGM

1951

Quo Vadis? — MGM
Westward The Women — MGM

1952
Ivanhoe — MGM

1953
Above and Beyond — MGM
I Love Melvin — MGM
Ride Vaquero! — MGM
All The Brothers Were Valiant — MGM

1954
Knights Of The Round Table — MGM
Valley Of The Kings — MGM
Rogue Cop — MGM

1955
Many Rivers To Cross — MGM
Quentin Durward — MGM

1956
The Last Hunt — MGM
D-Day, The Sixth of June — 20th Century-
Fox
The Power And The Prize — MGM

1957
Tip On A Dead Jockey — MGM

1958
The Law And Jake Wade — MGM
Saddle The Wind — MGM
Party Girl — MGM

1959
The Hangman — Paramount
The House Of Seven Hawks — MGM

1960
Killers of Kilimanjaro — Columbia

1963
The Miracle Of The White Stallions—
Buena Vista
Cattle King — MGM

1964
A House Is Not A Home — Embassy

1965
The Night Walker — Universal

1966
Johnny Tiger — Universal

1967
Savage Pampas — Prades Productions
Return Of The Gunfighter — MGM

1968
The Glass Sphinx — American
Productions
Where Angels Go Trouble Follows —
Columbia
The Day The Hot Line Got Hot —
Commonwealth United Entertainment
Devil Make Care — Feature Film Corp. of
America

TELEVISION APPEARANCES OF ROBERT TAYLOR

- 1952 Ed Sullivan Show - CBS-TV — Guest appearance to promote film
- 1959-61 The Detectives - ABC-TV — A weekly half-hour program
- 1961-62 Robert Taylor's Detectives - NBC-TV— A weekly hour program
- 1963 Dick Powell Show - NBC-TV — “Colossus” 3/12/63 & occasional host
- 1965 Star-Spangled City - NBC-TV — Two-part color special of Washington, DC tour
- 1967 Hondo - ABC-TV — “The Eagle Claw” 9/8/67
Hondo - ABC-TV — “The War Cry” 9/15/67
- 1966-68 Death Valley Days - Syndicated — A weekly half-hour program as host and occasional star.

MAJOR RADIO APPEARANCES

- 1934-51 Lux Radio Theater — Occasional appearances
- 1937-40 Good News — Especially as emcee in 1938
- 1939-51 Screen Guild Theater — Occasional appearances
- 1941-49 The Prudential Family Hour of Stars — Occasional appearances
- 1948 Jack Benny Show — Guest appearance 5/16/48

OTHER CREDITS

- 1943-45 Narrator of 17 training films for U.S. Navy
- 1958 Taylor formed Robert Taylor Productions

BIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

- Linda J. Alexander, *Reluctant Witness: Robert Taylor, Hollywood, and Communism* (Tease Publishing, 2008).
- E.A. Kral, "Robert Taylor: A Golden-Era Hollywood Movie King From Nebraska," *The Beatrice Daily Sun*, October 8, 1993, a 48-page tabloid-size supplement.
- E.A. Kral, "Robert Taylor: His Patriotism, His Critics, and His Enduring Fame," and "Robert Taylor's Accomplishments," *The Beatrice Daily Sun*, October 3, 1994, a portion of a 16-page tabloid-size supplement.
- E.A. Kral and Jean Sanders, *Profiles of Nationally Distinguished Nebraskans* (Gage County Historical Society, forthcoming).
- E.A. Kral, "Robert Taylor of Beatrice: The Nebraska Roots of A Hollywood Star," *Nebraska History*, Vol 75, No 4 (Winter 1994), pp. 280-291.
- Jane Mercer, *Great Lovers of the Movies* (Crescent Books, 1975), pp. 110-115. On the cover of this book, Taylor is shown with Clark Gable, John Gilbert, and Robert Redford.
- Lawrence Quirk, *The Films of Robert Taylor* (Citadel Press, 1975).
- Ursula Thiess, "...but I have promises to keep": my life before, with & after Robert Taylor (Creative Arts Book Company, 2003) Part II, pages 59-212.
- Charles Tranberg, *Robert Taylor: The Last Movie Star* (forthcoming).
- Jane Ellen Wayne, *The Life of Robert Taylor* (Warner, 1973; Robson, 1987; St. Martin's Press, 1989).
- Jane Ellen Wayne, *Stanwyck* (St. Martin's Press, 1986).
- Jane Ellen Wayne, "Robert Taylor," *The Beatrice Daily Sun*, October 3, 1994, a portion of a 16-page tabloid-size supplement.
- Jane Ellen Wayne, "Robert Taylor: The Movie Star Whose Spirit Never Left Nebraska," *Nebraska Life*, Summer 1998, pages 24-29.
- Jane Ellen Wayne, *The Leading Men of MGM* (Carroll and Graf, 2005) Chapter 5.
- Jane Ellen Wayne, *The Life and Loves of Barbara Stanwyck* (JR Books, 2009).
- *Robert Taylor appeared in 80 motion picture and television films, most of them with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the largest and "best" movie studio during the golden era (1925-1960) of Hollywood. He was a motion picture star and a star of two different series on television.

