

Barbara Stanwyck

By Paul Edward Johnson

I'm hooked on old movies. Last night I was up until four in the morning, watching The Man From Colorado.

During the first act John Ford appears to be taller than William Holden. But throughout the rest of this 1948 movie Holden is taller than Ford. Lots of movie stars back in the 30s, 40s, and 50s were short guys who wore platform shoes or stood upon crates in some of their movie scenes, including Alan Ladd in Shane and Clark Gable in Gone With the Wind.

Around noon I clicked on the Turner Classic Movies channel and there was Barbara Stanwyck in the 1941 movie Meet John Doe. The movie is as old as I am.

My father's favorite Hollywood movie actress was Barbara Stanwyck and he would often remark to me and my younger sisters and brothers how he felt Stanwyck resembled my mother.

Yes, they both had the same mischievous eyes, the same overbite, the same chins, the same petite figures, the same tiny waists, and the same . . . well let's just say I certainly see the resemblance.

Dad first met Mom on a blind date arranged by Dad's sister, Vivian. Mom and Vivian were sorority "sisters" and Mom needed a date for some banquet she wanted to attend with Vivian. It didn't matter to Mom that Dad was three years younger than Mom. He was as dark, tall and handsome as Cary Grant and as dashing in a tuxedo.

During Dad's teenage years in the 1930s he lived only several blocks from two movie theaters and he never missed a Barbara Stanwyck movie.

When he met my Mom at age 19, Vivian photographed them at the banquet table, the two of them looking up at Vivian as being every inch a Hollywood couple.

Soon after the night of the banquet, Mom got a job teaching first graders in Cody Wyoming. And Dad, who was living only several blocks from a railroad yard, hopped into a box car on a train heading for Cody.

He had been studying as a sophomore at the University of Minnesota to become a mechanical engineer, but had felt his real calling was to become a movie star in Hollywood musicals. While in high school he had lead roles in romantic musical stage productions.

In a confession Mom made to me when I was age forty, Mom and Dad conceived me upon a mountain top near Cody as a consequence of Dad hopping that freight train.

When I was age 19, Dad told me, "Had it not been for you showing up in 1941, I coulda been a movie star. And sing in South Pacific and Carousel and Annie Get Your Gun. Instead I had to marry your mom's version of Barbara Stanwyck."









