

GRACE NOTES

STEPHEN BORKOWSKI

NORRIS PERSONIFIED GRACE, AND ESPECIALLY GRACE UNDER FIRE. I recall an incident while she was serving as Artistic Director for the Provincetown Theater Company. After attending a performance in the nearby town of Wellfleet, we prepared to exit the theater to find a deluge of biblical proportions, with the car some distance away in the parking lot. Undeterred she ran ahead, without benefit of an umbrella and hiking up the handkerchief hem of her skirt, she waded into several inches of water in gold sandals to open the car door and unlock my side first, ever considerate of others and without regard to the effect on her appearance. She needn't have worried. Despite circumstances, she always looked effortlessly beautiful.

When I served as administrator to the Wilkes University Creative Writing program, she frequently was present at the residencies as she served on the Advisory Board to the MFA. She made a special effort to attend when a student was to receive the Norris Church Mailer scholarship award created in her honor by Norman and other friends.

Norris had a noble bearing and it was fitting that she would have adopted the mantra of another American original, the Duchess of Windsor who opined "My friends know I would rather shop than eat." Finding sustenance often was secondary to our retail forays in the environs of the University. I remember one excursion and the great care in selecting winter coats for her adult sons, then something else for her mother and her granddaughter. Finally, she chose something for herself to enjoy, with an eye to passing it along as a cherished heirloom. She spoke quite frankly about her health issues, and with my encouragement she usually bought whatever caught her fancy, from brown diamond jewelry to tiny ceramic dolls dressed in fanciful costumes. I was always happy to return her, weary but smiling, to her hotel room to rest

and prepare for an evening ahead. I would return hours later to escort her, and she would always be ready on time, and later faultlessly smiling and gracious to all who cared to pay her homage. I absorbed much from her fine example. She never betrayed weariness and smiled throughout.