

A STAR ACROSS THE SPECTRUM

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BEVERLY BENTLEY LED AN AMAZING PROFESSIONAL LIFE across the performing arts, having a quite distinguished career on stage, in film, and on television. She is credited with more than a dozen film appearance on her IMBD Filmography page and her theatrical work, as an actor and co-founder of Act IV, says much about her lifelong passion for the stage. Beverly's deep well of performative talent is well known and her son, Michael, notes that her "two joys in life were her family and theater." Yet Beverly was clearly much more than the sum of her professional accomplishments in New York, Los Angeles, and Provincetown.

I met Beverly at the Carnegie Hall Memorial for Norman Mailer, which took place on April 9, 2008. The crowd was enormous as family members, friends, book people, and a range of professional associates and others paid tribute to the life and work of Norman Mailer. I introduced myself to Beverly after the ceremony and I was deeply impressed by her graciousness, magnetism, warmth, and infectious ability to connect with a stranger in the midst of a huge crowd. And I was vaguely aware of some of the twists and turns that her professional career had taken. I was, however, particularly interested in learning about her as a person. In spite of my plan, Beverly turned the tables on me and asked about my life, family, and interests beyond my passion for Norman Mailer's art. It was an engaging conversation that left a mark on me, especially Beverly's "presence," which was electric, yet hard to describe.

Some years after our meeting, I learned that Beverly had attended Ernest Hemingway's 60th birthday party in Spain in 1959 when she was 29. Their meeting must have been a fascinating encounter—a professional actor engaging an existential actor, whose stage encompassed the planet. I have wondered what Ernest thought of Beverly and I would love to have eavesdropped on their meeting. And that meeting was surely of intense interest to Norman, considering his lifelong admiration for Hemingway and his work.