

"There is nothing in my life I find so wonderful as being able to hold the attention of a theatre full of people, making them forget themselves for a while, and feeling them respond to the lines you speak and the things you are trying to express."

Dora Sayers, February 18, 1939

-- Dora Sayers Caro --

Benares Own Star!



It's a long and winding road from Benares to Broadway, but Dora Sayers, Benares "own star" boldly travelled it in the late 1930s, leaving small-town Clarkson for a glamorous world where she would shine on the stage, and rub shoulders with people such as *Moss Hart*, *Tyrone Powers*, *Vincent Price*, *Frederick March*, *Ralph Bellamy*, *Ralph Forbes*, and *Katherine Hepburn*.

Dora had her first taste of acting at the age of ten in a pageant in Lorne Park, and went on to work with The Children's Theatre at Hart House at University of Toronto. After graduating from High School, Dora enjoyed the glamour and sophistication of a "Grand Tour" of Europe.



Dora and her mother Annie Harris Sayers, 1916

Following an apprenticeship at the Mt. Kisko Summer Theatre, one of Dora's first professional jobs was in the touring company of **Stage Door** in 1937.

Across the country, Dora's reviews were favourable: *"she imparts an intelligent inspection to her character"* (Pittsburgh), while a Cincinnati reviewer noted *"an interesting as well as attractive member of the group is Dora Sayers, who registers a pleasing impression"*.

Such notices ensured that Dora was busy with a variety of Broadway, summer stock, and productions such as **What Every Woman Knows**, **The American Way**, and **The Fabulous Invalid**, from the late 1930s on.

In 1941, following a very successful run on Broadway as well as its release as a movie, a touring production of **The Philadelphia Story** was mounted, with *Katherine Hepburn* playing opposite *Joseph Cotten*. Dora had a supporting role in the play, as well as being Katherine Hepburn's understudy. Dora modestly claimed that

"this play just has to have Miss Hepburn and I think they'd cancel the performance if she fell ill, rather than go on with an understudy".

In 1945, Dora joined *Moss Hart* on a South Pacific USO tour of Hart's comedy **The Man Who Came to Dinner**. As an "alien" Canadian, Dora required "special dispensation" to join the military tour.



Ralph Forbes

In 1946, Dora married *Ralph Forbes* (1896-1951), a British screen and stage actor whose career of over 70 films included **The Wedding Night** (1930) opposite *Clara Bow* and the acclaimed **Hounds of the Baskervilles** (1939).

Ralph - pronounced "Rafe" - and Dora had first met just prior to their working in the 1942 production of *Noel Coward's Private Lives*. Dora and Ralph were married at the home of actress *Ruth Chatterton*; she had been Ralph's first wife, and they had remained good friends after their 1932 divorce. The friendship extended to Dora and Ruth, who remained close after Ralph's death at the age of just 45.



Dora met her second husband, *Jim Caro*, while staying with Ruth in New York. When they married in 1954, Dora chose to leave her time on the stage behind her.



Dora and Jim Caro

Jim and Dora were married for 23 years living in southern France, Long Island, New York and the Bahamas. Jim died in 1977.

Dora is now 87 years old and lives in McLean, Virginia. Despite facing the challenge of poor health, she retains the beauty, sparkle and wit which shone from Benares to Broadway many years ago.

Dora Sayers Caro ~ Benares Own Star

was on display at Benares Historic House in Mississauga during 2002

For more information, contact the

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