

# Older Man Ideal Companion Declares Tap Dancer

## Eleanor Powell Has No Time For Dates, Doesn't Like Company Of Young Men



Eleanor Powell figures out some new routines for her latest musical picture, "Born To Dance" by having mental figures of herself go through the motions.

By Eleanor Powell

I'm free, white and 21.  
I can cook.  
I can sew.  
I'm agreeable, I hope.  
My face and figure are average.  
I have my own income.  
And yet I have never married.  
I have never been engaged.

A glance at the list of tappers in America shows that I am one of the few who have never said the sacred vows. Fred Astaire, Ruby Keeler, Ray Bolger, Bill Robinson, Charles Collins and Ginger Rogers have all been married, and with the exception of the latter, they are still married.

But I remain bottoms in marriage, even though I'd like to be married.  
I've been too busy for love, and before that I was too bashful.

The first 12 years of my life, I was too bashful to even glance at a boy.

My mother decided to send me to dancing school in Springfield, Mass., when I was six years old, so I could lose that bashfulness, and be able to meet people, knowing that it would be a very lonesome life for me without male companionship.

So, frightened to death, I took my dancing shoes to the school and under the tutelage of Ralph McKernan, learned my first "heel and toe" steps.

Days, weeks and months passed, and I lost my bashfulness, but I also lost my interest in other people. That must have been the turning point in my life when I decided that I loved dancing more than almost anything else in the world.

**B**ACK in school, the other girls were going to parties with their boy friends, but I was at McKernan's school wearing out shoe leather.

Even when I was 12, my daily schedule was overflowing. I helped with the housework in the morning, making beds, putting up lunch and generally aiding mother.

At school I was busy with my lessons and sports. After school came three hours of dancing, then home to help with dinner and later to my room to study.

Boys called at my home, but I was just too busy to accept their attentions.

At 13, I went to Atlantic City to visit my grand-parents, Mr. and Mrs. S. T. Torrey, and it was there that I met my first fellow. But the romance only lasted three days, for one day a producer, Gus Edwards, noticed me dancing on the sand.

He finally talked mother into allowing me to make a nightly dancing appearance at the Ritz Cafe. And thus ended my first romance, even before it actually got started. All summer, I practised on the beach and danced at the club during the night.

Returning to Springfield for school I still couldn't find time for boys.

For the next two summers, I returned to Atlantic City to dance at the cafe.

Then I finished high school. The big question in the mind of the Powell family was my future. Should I go to college or go to New York and take up a dancing career in earnest? Dancing won, so at the age of 16, mother and I started off to New York.

No dates in New York during the first months, for I was too busy trying to see producers in order to get a job. And I couldn't accept invitations because I didn't have enough money to keep a full wardrobe.

**I**N fact, mother and I were living on such a slim budget that we had to cut down on our food in order to take out \$20 so that I could take 10 tap lessons.

Finally I was given a principal role in the



Miss Powell, the world's finest feminine tap dancer, will wear out fifty pair of dancing shoes in the making of her latest motion picture.

musical, "Follow Thru". Now I had enough just enough, money to buy the clothes I would need for social life in New York. But now that the clothes were in sight, I was too busy to find time to use them.

This still seems to hold true. When I returned from New York recently, I brought a lot of new clothes, but I have been so busy working in "Born to Dance," that I haven't taken them out of the closet.

Then I went on the road. Living out of a suitcase, making one-night stands, always on the go, I found it impossible to make the kind of social contacts that I would enjoy.

Back to New York again I passed most of my waking hours in front of the footlights and in rehearsal halls. I appeared in "Fine and Dandy," with Joe Cook; Ziegfeld's "Hot-Cha"; "The Varieties"; as the lead opposite Bert Lahr and Harry Richman; in George White's "Scandals" and in "Crazy Quilt."

By this time, I was in love with dancing and nothing else. Men had stopped trying to get "dates" with me because the answer was always the same; "I've got to practise a new routine tonight."

Then I came to Hollywood to appear in the motion picture version of the "Scandals" for Fox. This was just a small part, but it was my first motion picture and I was so busy getting used to camera technique that I didn't even get a chance to visit the beaches, much

less to go to any of the Hollywood night spots in the company of the men of the film city.

**I**MEDIATELY after I finished this role, I was tested by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. They liked my work so I was given the leading role in "Broadway Melody of 1936." Acting and singing as well as dancing made it imperative that I almost live at the studio. Again I had no time for social life.

Returning to New York to fulfill my contract to do a leading role in the stage musical, "At Home Abroad," I must have surprised my friends by having "dates." I was seen here and there with the orchestra leader, Abe Lyman. For me to have a date was almost the same as announcing that I was engaged, at least that's the way the papers felt about it. But both Abe and I agree that it was just a friendship that had been going on for many years.

Back to Hollywood I came to play in the musical extravaganza, "Born to Dance." Still unmarried, still unengaged.

Then my name began to be linked with James Stewart, who is also in the new musical. We had a few dancing dates, but we are just friends.

I will soon be back in New York, and for the first time in my life it will be for a vacation. I'm wondering what will happen.

Now that I have signed with M-G-M, have my home in Beverly Hills and am moving my grand-



James Stewart and Eleanor Powell take a stroll between scenes of their new film, "Born To Dance." Others in the cast are Virginia Bruce, Buddy Ebsen and Una Merkel.



Swinging into the spectacular finale routine for the "Swinging The Jinx Away" number in the musical "Born To Dance." Miss Powell starred in several Broadway musical shows before going to Hollywood.

## Five Star Critic Appends Powell Story

By Linda Lane

"THE World's Greatest Feminine Tap Dancer!"

That's Eleanor Powell's title—and she earned it by winning the championship award of the Dancing Masters of America. Bill Robinson won the male award.

Miss Powell first came to Hollywood to appear in a small dancing role. She was preparing to return to Broadway when she was offered a screen test for a dancing bit in M-G-M's "Broadway Melody of 1936."

Until then, no leading woman had been chosen. Many screen tests had been made, but final decision had not been made. Louis B. Mayer, the studio head, was viewing the many screen tests when a new face and figure leaped upon the screen.

Mayer asked her identity. He was told she was Eleanor Powell whose only screen experience had been one small dancing part.

"That is our leading woman!" Mayer exclaimed.

Miss Powell was called in. Mayer advised how to improve her make-up, how to change her hairdress. He instructed the building of sets to fit her personality, how to photograph her and gown her—and Eleanor Powell emerged a full-fledged star overnight.

She has always been a great lover of sports. Her favorite was horseback riding, but her mother realized that this was too risky for her talented daughter, so Eleanor took up swimming and has become a champion, having won several medals in races.

**E**LEANOR is a very jazzy, modern dance queen on the stage—but at home she's the opposite. She likes to make hook rugs and work in her garden.

After rehearsing definite routines all day, she finishes by doing a half hour of her "favorite" steps for her own amusement. She is tireless, having been known to make many a veteran piano accompanist cry "quit."

Joan Crawford is her favorite personality. And like the noted actress she names gardenias as her favorite flower. Blue is her favorite color. She could eat roast beef and ice cream every day of the year, she says.

She sleeps eight hours but admits that she needs ten because of the energy she uses during the day.

Loves to read. Her favorite modern author is Louis Bromfield, and Noel Coward gets that award in the modern playwright class. Enjoys reading about Henry the Eighth, and likes McClelland Barclay's drawings.

She doesn't smoke or drink. Believes in good luck pieces and carries a solid gold elephant.

Eleanor won't have to do her tap dancing routines at home by herself any more, for the other day she purchased a German shepherd police dog that can actually do a tap dance.

Eleven months old, the dog was being trained for show purposes when the star visited his kennel, not to buy a dog, but to get some equipment. Seeing the police dog, she could not resist buying it after it did a tap dance to music.

Eleanor is going to have canine tap shoes made for "Kink," so his clicking can be heard. She's a real gal—her friends call her "Sweetie."