

Hollywood and Freemasonry

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Ermes Efron Borgnino (1917
– 2012)

Ernest Borgnine (1917 – 2012)

Brother Borgnine was raised in Abingdon Lodge #48, Grand Lodge of Virginia in 1950.

Born to immigrant parents, he spent a portion of his childhood living in Italy. Ermes Efron Borgnino, was born in Hamden, Connecticut in January 1917. After his parents' divorce two years later, he moved in with his mother, Anna, to Italy, where they resided for four-and-a-half years. Following the couple's reconciliation, Anna and Ermes moved back to the US, where he spent the remainder of his childhood. It was around this time that the family changed their name from "Borgino" to "Borgnine." Ermes is better known by the name Ernest Borgnine.

Ernest Borgnine enlisted in the US Navy in 1935, following his high-school graduation. For the majority of his career with the service, he was stationed aboard the USS Lambertson (DD-119). In October 1941, he was honourably discharged. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Borgnine re-enlisted and was dispatched to the Atlantic Coast. He served aboard the USS Sylph (PY-12), a patrol boat.

He served with distinction throughout the WW II, concluding his service with the rank of gunner's mate, first class. He was also

awarded a number of decorations, including the World War II Victory Medal, the Navy Good Conduct Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the Bronze Star and the American Defense Service Medal with Fleet Clasp.

Ernest Borgnine moved back into his parents' house following his discharge from the Navy. However, he had trouble finding a direction in life, later saying in an interview with the British Film Institute:

"After World War II, we wanted no more part in war. I didn't even want to be a Boy Scout. I went home and said that I was through with the Navy and so now, what do we do? So I went home to mother, and after a few weeks of patting me on the back and 'You did good,' and everything else, one day she said, 'Well?' like mothers do. Which meant, 'All right, you gonna get a job or what?'"

✘ Borgnine's mother noted that he'd always been a ham and would possibly enjoy acting. After training at the Randall School of Drama in Connecticut.

In 1946, he traveled with a friend down to a little town called Abingdon, Virginia, to see what the Barter Theatre had to offer. It offered nothing except hard work and board. His friend, not accepting the work they offered him, stayed one day – Ernest stayed five years. In that time he grew to love the town and all it offered. The people, in particular, were simply marvelous.

Just a few years into his career, he won a role on Broadway, appearing in the Pulitzer Prize winning play, *Harvey*. Ernest Borgnine began acting in Hollywood shortly after hitting Broadway. While he started off playing villains and background characters, he was given the opportunity to star in 1955's *Marty*, which became a critical smash hit, for his portrayal of the film's title character, Borgnine won the Oscar for Best Actor at the 28th Academy Awards, beating out such legends as James Dean,

Frank Sinatra, Spencer Tracey and James Cagney.

Bro. Borgnine had an incredible acting career that spanned decades, with arguably his most notable role being Lt. Cmdr. Quinton McHale in the ABC sitcom, McHale's Navy (1962-66). In 1969, Bro. Borgnine appeared in one of his most famous roles, portraying Dutch Engstrom in The Wild Bunch. Over a decade later, he starred in another popular TV series, Airwolf (1984-87), playing Dom Santini, a veteran of both World War II and the Korean War.

Continuing his work in Hollywood into the early 2010s, Borgnine made memorable appearances in such films as All Dogs Go to Heaven 2 (1996) and Red (2010). Younger viewers even got to hear his voice as Mermaid Man on the hit Nickelodeon cartoon, Spongebob Squarepants (1999-present).

✘ On November 9, 2000, he was presented with his 50-year pin by the Grand Master of Masons in Virginia, the Illustrious William Lee Holiday.

Bro. Borgnine was proud of his membership, and said so in his own words:

"As I've advanced in Masonry, I have found we are an elite group of people who believe in God, country, family and neighbors. We work hard to help our fellowman; and through our charitable work, such as support for the Childhood Language Disorders Centers, we have made it possible to help many children grow into good American citizens. We should always be proud of the Order we belong to. Where in all the world do you find so many great men and Brothers who have helped the whole wide world?"

On July 8, 2012, Bro. Borgnine passed away of kidney failure at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. He was 95 years old. The famed actor was laid to rest at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Los

Angeles, California, where a memorial bench was later dedicated to his memory.

