

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



(O)SC

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DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Susan Flynn wasn't raised in Birmingham, but her parents live here now. She is staying with them while starring at the Birmingham Theatre in "Stepping Out," a comedy with tap dancing that runs through Sunday, Feb. 5.

Star steps out in Birmingham

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

STAVING WITH her family while her show is in town is one of the pluses enjoyed by Susan Flynn, who stars in "Stepping Out" at the Birmingham Theatre.

The New York actress won critical praise for recent appearances in Off-Broadway revivals of "Company" and "Dames at Sea." She was in fine spirits when she was interviewed one day last week at her parents' home in Birmingham.

An energetic blonde, Flynn was casually dressed in a red and white patterned pajama top and shorts. George Schubering wasn't around that afternoon, but her mother, Margaret, was — beaming while she popped in and out, making plans for another in a series of welcoming parties. Schubering also brought out

newspaper clippings about her daughter's previous shows and said good naturedly, "That's what mothers are for." In explanation of her absence.

Flynn is no shrinking violet. She talked enthusiastically, laughed heartily as she recalled such adventures as her last appearance in metropolitan Detroit, when she played the Fisher Theatre in a show that hoped to go to Broadway but flopped here, and (on a more upbeat note) talked about how she met a tall dark Irishman at a bus stop, gave him her phone number on the bus, and eventually became his wife.

"**BABYLON COAST**" was the name of the show that was being produced during its run at the Fisher in 1983. "It was a disaster," Flynn said. One of the actresses (who is now starring on Broadway in "Phantom of the Opera") was fired opening night.

That same night, "They had never staged the fight scenes," Flynn said, beginning a story that continued with one of the actors being knocked cold and two performers being knocked into the orchestra pit.

"The first thing I heard from my dressing room was a voice saying, 'Just to see the two people in the pit all right,'" she said.

During the run at the Fisher, "The cast sat at the St. Regis and talked about how to fix it." The director landed in the hospital, and the choreographer was fired.

Her role was the second female lead, playing a barroom floozy. She looks back at that experience as "an interlude that helped pay for our cop."

IN THOSE DAYS, Flynn was married to her first husband, and she went by the stage name of Susan Elisabeth Scott. Then-husband Stephen McNaughton, whose real surname is Scott, is also an actor and is a familiar face to TV soap opera fans.

After she divorced and remarried, she took the surname of husband Thomas Flynn. They were married last December, and live on the Hudson River, in West New York-New Jersey, she said. Her description of them from their apartment is, "We have the whole skyline of Manhattan."

When they met in August 1986 at the bus stop, Flynn was coming home late from planning a wedding

shower, and he had been entertaining clients. He sells advertising for a financial magazine, CFO, and heads the New York office.

The tall (6-foot 5-inch) guy impressed her, and she began digging around in her purse like she was looking for something. "Don't you have money to ride this bus?" he quizzed.

With that, the two began a conversation and rode together on the bus. She gave him her phone number and, "Two days later we went out to dinner. It was like I'd known him my whole life. In the beginning it was frightening. There was so much connection going on."

Flynn has been married 14 years and divorced a couple of years before she met her present husband. She talked fresh about the breakup, saying she and Stephen had married young and he wanted to be free (he has since remarried), thinking he had missed something.

"I loved being married the first time around," she said. "I think I always felt I would be married again."

FLYNN GOT HER start in acting at the age of 8, when her mother took her to audition for a role with Pat O'Brien at the Cherry County Playhouse in Traverse City where she was born.

"It was a big part. I was the backup. I learned all the lines. When the first girl (who was older) didn't show up, I got the part."

Schubering said Susan had really knuckled down to studying the part. "She had a new two-wheeler bike, and she didn't even ride it."

The family lived in Akron, Ohio, where Flynn grew up and went to high school. She studied acting at the University of Denver.

"My resume is really heavy with Broadway shows," she said. Although she sings and dances, she likes acting best. "I think it was my voice I was leaning on the most," she said, responding to a question about what made her a standout at auditions.

"Over the years, I've never been the ingenue," Flynn said. "I've always been the comic lead — or bitch or whore!" She roared with laughter.

Flynn is the dance teacher who conducts a nighttime tap dancing class in London and turns her awkward adult students into smart-steppers for a recital.



The students rehearse for a recital, with a bevy of ill-assorted hats the costume shop provided instead of the bowlers they ordered.

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