

During 1919 Seyffert worked hard for efforts to help the needy which included war relief for those inflicted with the cruelty of WW I. He directed performances, did portraits and demonstrated portrait painting as a “bohemian artist”. In a bohemian festival on Camac Street, Philadelphia he demonstrated portrait painting enlisting models to donate to the cause. He also directed with friend and colleague Arthur Carles a “tableaux” as a performance for a society costume ball held at the Bellevue Hotel - a recreation of visual art masterpieces done with costumed models from the Fellowship of the Pennsylvania Academy and wealthy patron’s attractive family members. At Thanksgiving time Aaron Blumenthal donated on behalf of himself and his chocolate and candy business a total of \$50,000 (in 1919!) to the Jewish War Relief Campaign and for this he was to have Leopold Seyffert paint his portrait. The same year all this for the public good was contrary to his painting a very personal masterpiece now in the Los Angeles County Museum—“Nude with Chinese Background” Oil on canvas 54 1/2 x 60 1/4 in., gift of Mr. and Mrs. William Preston Harrison. Since around 1915 Seyffert

had painted at least 10 figure paintings of his model and later wife, Grace, known as “Bobbie”- many of which are in museums collections. In addition he exhibited a second nude of Bobbie called “Silver Screen” at the Pennsylvania Academy Annual. The portrait of Winwood when exhibited in New York drew critical praise - New York Tribune, 27 Apr 1919, Sun, First Edition “Miss Estelle Winwood as Armande in Moliere is clever without the glamour that the theme invites” and The New York Times Magazine - 27 Apr, 1919,

“a bouncing picture of a woman with big eyes and big eyelashes, yellow hair and bunches on either side of a somewhat haggard face, scarlet lips, and a striking costume of pale blue and yellow with a cape of deeper blue. One recalls Gainsborough suffered from the necessity of painting portraits of sitters whose faces already were painted at bay. When the practice of making up was universal, and reflects that Mr. Seyffert has at least made his predicament unmistakable and has accepted it with gusto and gaiety “



Estelle Winwood born 24 Jan 1883 – died 20 June 1984
1919 oil portrait by Leopold Seyffert

Winwood was 96 when she last appeared in television's Quincy M.E. following a career spanning 80 years . At the time of her death she was the all-time oldest member of the Screen Actor's Guild.

In 1888 when Estelle saw the girl on a white horse at the circus, she decided that she wanted to be an actress so from the age of 5 with the disapproval of her father she accomplished stardom. Her mother had her train with the Liverpool Repertory Company, and Estelle began her lifelong career beginning in London's West End Theatres and ending in Los Angeles.



Writer Gordon Howard, a close friend in her later years reminisced:

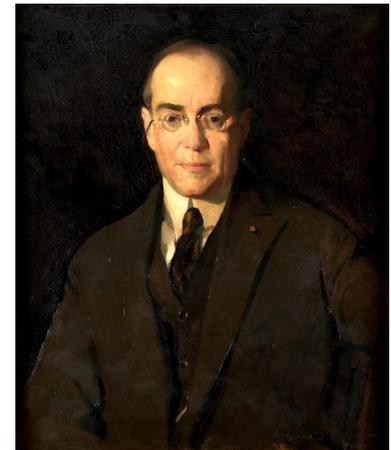
“Feisty and fascinating Estelle Winwood did not suffer fools gladly. Extremely candid, bitingly honest and possessing an avid dislike of

any form of pretense, she also possessed tremendous charm, a sense of vulnerability, and a total femininity which endeared her to all who were included in her circle of friends. Fellow actors who appeared with her on stage, on television and in films always held her in high esteem and spoke of her with tremendous warmth and affection.

She was born Estelle Ruth Goodwin in Lee, Kent, England on January 24, 1883. Her life would be remarkably long. When she passed away in 1984 at the Motion Picture and Television Home Hospital in Woodland Hills, California, she was the all-time oldest member of the Screen Actors Guild.

She married four times, and of her final union with Robert Henderson, Estelle always said, “I can’t remember whether I divorced him or not.” Actor-director Mr. Henderson ran an acting school in London and visited her at least once a year in the latter years of her life in the United States.

The model did in fact introduce lipstick to women in America. In an interview in 1968 “ I was not one of those raving beauties of the day” she said “but I looked quite nice when I was made up for stage. There wasn’t anything like lipstick in those days (1916) so I wore red greasepaint”. Soon many feminist women began wearing the style. When she died at 101 years old in 1984 the UPI story said that Ms. Winwood was widely admired in both the United Kingdom and England for her wide array of character portrayals, and she once claimed she should have been given the title Dame for bringing in lipstick for women. She also said in 1960 "I think I've done more for women all over the world by being the first person to use rouge on my lips in public “ . The painting was first exhibited in 1919 at the National Association of Portrait Painters and it brought many reviews from critics. To celebrate Leopold Seyffert dined with other exhibiting artists including Sargent, Henri, Bellows and Glackens at a dinner given by Samuel Montgomery Roosevelt . Seyffert spent equal time between Philadelphia and New York. His studio at 10 S. 18th Street in Philadelphia was close to his home on Rittenhouse Square and the studio was always active socially. Helen Fleck , his wife, frequently held teas and costume parties for the art and music community . In 1918 he painted more than 25 portraits to raise money for the war effort and he and an artist friend Arthur Carles painted Seyffert’s Mercedes in camouflage and the two directed a “Tableaux” at the Bellevue! In 1919 in addition to this portrait of Estelle Winwood he painted John Wanamaker, merchant, Samuel Gompers, labor leader, Dr. William Sydney Thayer, WW1 Brigadier General in the US Medical Corps and head of Red Cross Hospitals in France, Judge Theodore Jenkins, James Montgomery Beck, Congressman. Each of these historic figures played dramatic roles in American history but most important is that he sat and painted them from life.



Estelle was a chain smoker consuming three or four packets of cigarettes a day. However, she never inhaled deeply, merely puffed and usually dispatched each cigarette to one of many discreetly placed bowls of water throughout her home, long before it was finished. She loved Margaritas and champagne and always looked sophisticated and elegant with a glass in one hand and her constant cigarette in the other. In her 90s she had broken both hips and stubbornly refused therapy, but with the assistance of a cane she managed very well.

Almost until the end of her life, on 20 June, 1984, Estelle seemed indestructible. Though unable to converse toward the end, she would still manage to greet friends and visitors with her wry smile, raise her eyebrows and those magnificent eyes would open wide—a scene stealer and a star right to the final curtain.

ABOUT THE PAINTING: Leopold Seyffert's oil portrait of Estelle Winwood shows her in a costume worn for one of her earlier theatre performances in "Moliere" that played for 64 performances at the Liberty Theatre (where the Wax Museum is now on W. 42nd Street-New York City) . But the show actually previewed in Philadelphia at the Broad Theatre March 2, 1919 and likely the work was done within this time period. Her hands are hidden by her cape and she looks aside as if to be listening. She wears makeup on her cheeks and lips and critics of the painting referred to that as being like a "Gainsborough who painted portraits of those already painted". But interestingly



Her first marriage was to famed Broadway director, producer, writer, and one-time actor, Guthrie McClintic who was to later marry Katharine Cornell in 1921. Her second marriage was to Arthur Chesney (1907) and they divorced in 1928. Mr. Chesney was the brother of the gifted actor Edmund Gwenn. Husband three was New Zealand farmer Francis Barlow Bradley whom she wed in 1928. Estelle visited Australia briefly whilst en route to New Zealand at this time. Their marriage ended with his untimely death the following year. She married Mr. Henderson in 1944 and there is no clear evidence of when they divorced.

We (Gordon Howard) first met in 1974. The front door to her home was wide open but there was no response to our knock. Becoming a little concerned we went over to a neighbor who told us, "Estelle never gets up before two in the afternoon. She plays bridge all night." Returning at 2:30 pm we were greeted warmly at the door by Estelle who floated toward us in a flowing nightgown and matching night cap. On her forehead there was a fairly



large piece of sticking plaster, and sensing that we found this a little alarming, she said, "Oh, don't worry about that. It's just a frownie. I invented them. It stops wrinkles appearing while you're sleeping." She was then 91 and we found this very endearing. Later in the afternoon we invited Estelle to have dinner with us at a little seafood restaurant we had found in Santa Monica. Once in the car it was clear that she rather thought a kidnapping was in the air, and frequently declared her suspicions of where we were going. She insisted we stop off at her niece's home to inform her of our destination. At the restaurant, Estelle barely touched her meal, and instructed the waitress, "My dear, you may tell the chef that the fish was dreadful."

During the next ten years, she learned to trust her “kidnappers” and our friendship flourished. Often we would watch movies in her home, sometimes with Estelle propped up in her four poster bed, and we would take long walks in the evening with Estelle in a wheelchair and her beloved dog Lily (of the Valley) running ahead, and her cat, Wheats, following behind. Estelle always nursed a flashlight which she used with great theatrical effect to keep an eye on her pets.

Eating out with Estelle was always an experience because she was never able to accept the fact that the top service she had known in New York society restaurants and hotels of the 1920s and '30s was hard to find in the '70s and '80s. She would sometimes act in a rather imperious manner, but always with a twinkle in her eye. She could be quite vocal should the service be less than immediate. On one occasion we dined at a restaurant in Hollywood where all the waiters wore overalls and sported beards. They were all keen to provide exemplary service for Miss Winwood whom they instantly recognized. Estelle summoned one young man to our table and exclaimed, “Why don’t you shave that dreadful thing off your face?” One could only describe his reaction as delight.



On another occasion we were waiting for our car when a lady rushed over to Estelle and started gushing, “You were the only good thing in Murder by Death.” Estelle smiled graciously, but as the fan departed, she remarked, “Fool of a woman, what would she know?” She found it hard to believe that anyone would be impressed by her work. A few years later we were talking about Murder by Death and Estelle suddenly remarked, “I can’t remember whether I was in a wheelchair or whether I was pushing someone else in a wheelchair.” We readily cleared up this dilemma for her.

Estelle always said she was not a film woman, “and only did it for the money.” She gave up playing tennis and riding horseback in her 70s and decided it was time to stop driving after once finding herself on the wrong side of the road. In an interview with Aljean Harmetz of the New York Times prior to her centenary she said, “I’ve never taken life seriously about being an actress—I haven’t any advice. Everything’s luck. If you lose, you have to leave acting. If you win, you make a fortune. I’ve always looked on 100 as something for my great-great-grandmother in England. Coming to me it’s like a punishment. Who wants to be 100?” Asked if it was better than the alternative, she quickly replied, “I wouldn’t mind being dead—it would be something new.” Though claiming to have few women friends, Estelle always spoke in glowing terms of Bette Davis, Joan Blondell and Ann Sothern. She regretted not knowing Mae West. Marsha Hunt said, “She was a phenomenon and when we did The Cocktail Party [at the La Jolla Playhouse] together, at 70 years of age, she possessed one of the most beautiful figures I have ever seen.” Ann Sothern said, “I wish I had known Estelle better. My friend Billie Burke, was cast in my TV show and to my immense sorrow, was no longer able to retain her lines. I said to her, ‘Billie, it isn’t worth it.’ Estelle replaced her and sailed through the part.” Vanessa Brown said, “We did a play together [the mystery thriller A Door to a Room, at the Cape Playhouse] and she was a great help to me professionally as well as driving me to and from the theater. I was so sorry when her memory failed during the shooting of Rosie with Rosalind Russell and she had to be replaced.” Once asked to comment on Estelle’s fragility, Tallulah Bankhead contributed the astute comment that, “A snowflake would give Estelle a concussion.”



During 1966 Estelle appeared on stage in Connecticut in an original comedy called Nathan Weinstein, Mystic. In 1967 she made two movies, Games and Camelot. Games, which according to star Simone Signoret was filmed at "Universal speed," featured Estelle as Mrs. Beattie, next door neighbor to James Caan and Katharine Ross, who is continually, and comically, looking for her cat Valentino. In Camelot (Warner Bros.) she played Lady Clarinda, lady in waiting to Vanessa Redgrave's Queen Guinevere.

In 1968 she was hilarious in the original Mel Brooks classic The Producers (Studio/Canal). Her role was that of "Hold Me, Touch Me," one of the chief backers for Zero Mostel's hoped-for flop Springtime for Hitler. Of Zero Mostel, Estelle said, "My dears, he nearly crushed me to death, he was so heavy."

Estelle was seen on television in The Name of the Game - The Taker (1968), The Outsider - The Secret of Mareno Bay (1969), Love American Style - Love and the Living Doll (1969), Jenny (1970), and The Doris Day Show - The Antique (1968) and Charity Begins in the Office (1971). Estelle loved working with Doris Day and they formed a strong friendship because of their mutual love of animals. In the late '80s we sent Miss Day several candid photographs of Estelle. Doris responded with a very friendly letter expressing her great admiration and respect for this very special lady.

Remaining busy on Television she appeared in Decisions, Decisions (1972), Love American Style - Love and the Old Flames (1972), Banyon - Time Lapse (1973), Barnaby Jones - Murder in the Doll's House (1973), and Cannon - The Sounds of Silence (1974).

In 1976 she appeared in what was to be her final motion picture, Murder by Death, the amusing Neil Simon murder mystery spoof. For her big screen finale Estelle was in great company with Peter Sellers, Peter Falk, David Niven, Maggie Smith, Alec Guinness, Nancy Walker, Truman Capote and Elsa Lanchester. Said Estelle "My part was the sort of role I enjoy, sitting down with very little to say."

There were two more television appearances. In 1976 she was in Police Story - Monster Manor, and then finally in Quincy - Honor the Elders (1980).

After Quincy Estelle declared, "I am through with acting unless I can find the sitting-down-with-little-to-say type of role again. It is too difficult to remember lines and I am deaf so I can't hear the cues." As she approached her 100th birthday we wrote to Queen Elizabeth to suggest that a congratulatory letter be sent to Estelle. Her Majesty's Private Secretary sent confirmation that Miss Winwood would definitely be the recipient of a message from the Queen. The celebrations were a huge success and Estelle, in addition to receiving the Queen's letter, was also favored with a cable from President Ronald Reagan and congratulatory messages from Doris Day, George Burns and many others in the industry. There was also a flood of fan mail, and Colin answered these letters as he had done in past years, with Estelle personally signing all the cards and photographs requested.

Estelle's dearest and best friend from the 1920s until her death in the '60s was Tallulah Bankhead and she told us some fascinating stories about this toast of the London stage. During a barbecue at her niece's home we were conversing with Estelle about Miss Bankhead when she whispered, "Would you like to hear a shocking story?"

She then told of first meeting Miss Bankhead at a party in New York in the 1920s when the host introduced Estelle to this "beautiful girl who lived in the same building." She said, "Tallulah was so gloriously lovely that I hated her on sight. Later, to my horror, everyone had left the party and the host, who had been flirting with me all evening, had an affair with me. I began to panic and remembered that Tallulah lived in the same building. She let me in and when I explained what had happened she immediately ushered me to the bathroom and loaned me her douche kit and this was the beginning of our enduring friendship."

Estelle always scoffed at the stories that Tallulah was a lesbian, and recounted a very telling conversation which began with Estelle asking Tallulah, "Have you ever made love with a man?" "Yes," Tallulah replied, "but I didn't like it very much." Estelle continued, "Did you love the man?" "No," said Tallulah. "Then find a man you do love and try it again," Estelle insisted. Tallulah did and duly advised her advisor that she liked it. There was never any question of her sexuality, in Estelle's mind, after that.

Estelle always wanted to be a stage actress. Her father, a civil engineer, thought her quite mad to even think of such a career. She studied at the Lyric Stage Academy in London and despite his strong protestations made her professional debut in Johannesburg, South Africa at the age of 20, an event which delighted her mother. During World War I she operated the Liverpool Repertory Company in England and under the personal direction of George Bernard Shaw appeared in his production of Arms and the Man. "Shaw was very nice but could be very sarcastic," she recalled. His direction was very simple, "Just stand still and say my lines."

Estelle appeared on stage in countless productions in London's West End and finally debuted on Broadway in *Hush* (1916). In an interview with Roy Curtis Bramwell when she was 76, Estelle declared, "You know, there's hardly a woman in the world who is not grateful to me. Except, possibly, nuns and young girls at school." For it is documented that she played a role in popularizing lipstick. "I remember," she said, "it was in New York in 1916, and I was young and

pretty then. I used to paint my lips with Leichner's No. 2 stage make-up. It was used in the theater for rouging your cheeks, you know, and I was considered very terrible for wearing it off stage. At first, only a few more young actresses copied me. Then not long afterwards the debs started using it. That started everybody off, and now look."

For the next two decades Estelle became a popular and highly respected resident on the Broadway stage appearing in *A*

Successful Calamity (1917), *Why Marry?* (1917-8), *A Little Journey* (1918), *Moliere* (1919), *Too Many Husbands* (1919-20), *The Tyranny of Love* (1921), *The Circle* (1921), *Madame Pierre* (1922), *Go Easy Mabel* (1922), *The Red Poppy* (1922), *Anything Might Happen* (1923), *But for the Grace of God* (1923), *Spring Cleaning* (1923), *The Buccaneer* (1925), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1925), *The Weak Woman* (1926), *The Chief Thing* (1926), *Beau-Strings* (1926), *Head or Tail* (1926), *Trelawney of the Wells* (1927), *Fallen Angels* (1927), *We Never Learn* (1928), *The Furies* (1928), *Scarlet Sister Mary* (1930) with Ethel Barrymore, and *The Admirable Crichton* (1931).



She then made at right *The Misfits* (UA, 1961) with Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe, playing a church lady in a bar collecting money for the cause. She thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity of meeting and working with Mr. Gable. It was then back to television with *Adventures in Paradise - A Penny a Day* (1961),



Thriller (Boris Karloff Theater) - *Dialogues with Death* (1961), and *Dennis the Menace - Calling All Bird Lovers* (1962). Control Productions then signed Estelle for the role of Sybil in *The Magic Sword* (1962) which had her concocting rare potions in her cauldron. Basil Rathbone and Gary Lockwood were the stars and both Estelle and Mr. Rathbone appear to be having a great time. This was followed by the mystery-comedy hit *The Notorious Landlady* (Col., 1962) starring Jack Lemmon, Kim Novak and Fred Astaire. Estelle plays Mrs. Dunhill, neighbor to Kim Novak, who witnesses a shooting which places her in the hot seat. In 1962 she also appeared in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* along with Dan O'Herlihy and Glynis Johns which is considered to be a poor remake of the 1919 German classic. In 1964 Estelle played Dona Anna in *Dead Ringer* (Who Is Buried in My Grave?) (Warner Bros.) with Bette Davis, Peter Lawford, Karl Malden and the wonderfully talented Jean Hagen. This was directed by Miss Davis's co-star of yesteryear, Paul Henreid and though considered by many to be farfetched, it is both very watchable and entertaining. On television her credits roll on with: *Dr. Kildare - The Last Leaves on the Tree* (1964), *The Rogues - Wherefore Art Thou, Harold?* (1965), *The F.B.I. - The Monster* (1965), *Perry Mason - The Case of the Final Fadeout* (1966), *The Man From U.N.C.L.E. - The Her Master's Voice Affair* (1966), *Bewitched - Witches and Warlocks Are My Favorite Things* (1966), *ABC Stage 67 - The People Trap* (1966), *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E. - The Kooky Spook Affair* (1967). In the popular ABC-TV series *Batman*, Estelle played Aunt Hilda in five episodes: *Marsha, Queen of Diamonds* (1966), *Marsha, Scheme of Diamonds* (1966), *Penguin Is a Girl's Best Friend* (1967), *Penguin Sets a Trend* (1967), and *Penguin's Disastrous End* (1967).

Despite her misgivings about the English climate she returned to the UK to film *Alive and Kicking* (Associated British/Pathe 1958) with one of the great Dames of the English theater, Dame Sybil Thorndike and Kathleen Harrison. This amusing romp, set in Ireland though filmed in Scotland, starring these three elderly but vigorous ladies who escape from a rest home and after an escapade on a Russian trawler, end up on a remote island off the West Coast of Ireland. They are aided and abetted by the irrepressible Stanley Holloway.

Disney studios signed her for the role of Sheila Sugrue in *Darby O’Gill and the Little People* (1959) featuring handsome young Sean Connery along with Albert Sharpe as the wily old caretaker, Darby O’Gill. Kieron Moore plays her son, Pony, and lovely Janet Munro is Katie, Darby’s daughter. Estelle is terrific as the doting mother scheming for her big bully of a son to replace Darby as estate caretaker and marry Katie. There are lots of leprechauns on hand and though a box office disappointment, it is now considered to be one of Disney’s best live action films. Boasting terrific special effects, it is a bit scary, but also is graced with delightful whimsy.



In 1960 Lucille Ball tried desperately to have Estelle appear with her on Broadway in *Wildcat* and when her offers were rejected Miss Ball went personally to Estelle’s home to “flatter, plead or bribe” but to no avail. Estelle had made up her mind and remained adamant.

Television and the big screen kept Estelle extremely busy throughout the ‘60s. On the small screen she appeared in: *The Twilight Zone - Long Live Walter Jameson* (1960), *The Ann Sothern Show - One for the Books* (1960), and *Bourbon Street Beat - Ferry to Algiers* (1960). She appeared in the movie *Sergeant Rutledge* (WB, 1960) directed by John Ford, with Jeffrey Hunter, Constance Towers, Woody Strode and Estelle in an uncredited role.

In 1931 she returned to England and appeared in lauded stage productions of *The Love Game*, *See Naples and Die*, *Hotel Universe*, and at the Gate Theatre starred in the title role of *Maya* which Peter Godfrey directed.

Back in the United States her stage credits included: *The Distaff Side* (1934), *The Farmer Takes a Wife* (1934), *The Ugly Runts* (1935), *The Pursuit of Happiness* (1935), *Eden End* (1935), *I Want a Policeman* (1936), and *Reflected Glory* (1936).

Her first appearances on film were in *Night Angel* (1931) from which her scenes were deleted prior to release, and *The House of Trent* (1933). Four years later she made the excellent film version of James Barrie’s whimsical play *Quality Street* (RKO, 1937) under the direction of George Stevens, with Katharine Hepburn and Franchot Tone starring. During the making of this feature Estelle and Franchot Tone were tennis buddies. “Joan Crawford was an idiot,” declared Estelle. “How could anyone give up Franchot.”

It was then back to her first love, the stage, and it would be many years before she would be seen again on the big screen. Broadway again beckoned with *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1938) produced by and starring Estelle, *On The Rocks* (1938), *Good Hunting* (1938), and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1939) which she directed and played Lady Bracknell, of which Brooks Atkinson of the New York Times wrote that her playing had, “the shine and polish of porcelain ware.” She also was in *When We Are Married* (1939), and *Ladies in Retirement* (1940) with Flora Robson which found Estelle engaging in grim drama for two years, but she returned to comedy with *The Pirate* (1942) starring Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. Next came the Agatha Christie whodunit *Ten Little Indians* (1944), *Lady Windemere’s Fan* (1946) which starred Cornelia Otis Skinner and Henry Daniell, *The Madwoman of Chaillot* (1948), and *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* (1950) as Mrs. Warren, *Mr. Pickwick* (1952), and *Mrs. Patterson* (1954).

MGM signed her to play Mrs. Toquet (the Fairy Godmother) in *The Glass Slipper* (1955) which starred Leslie Caron and Michael Wilding with Elsa Lanchester also on board. Estelle enjoyed working with Leslie Caron and thought Mr. Wilding to be “quite charming.” In 1956 she joined Grace Kelly, Louis Jourdan and Alec Guinness in *The Swan* (MGM) with her character having the rather unusual name of Symphorosa. She was not enamored of Jessie Royce Landis who “continually tried to upstage me.” She declared that Martita Hunt had tried the same thing on stage in *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, “but I just opened my eyes wide and nobody would even think of looking at anyone else when I did that.”

Estelle’s prolific television career began in 1946 with Noel Coward’s *Blithe Spirit*. Appearances during the fifties included: *Lights Out - Masque* (1950), *Suspense - The Rose Garden* (1951), *Studio One - A Bargain with God* (1953), and *Birthright* (1953), *Broadway Television Theatre - Outward Bound* (1952), *Criminal at Large* (1953) and *The Bat* (1953), *Kraft Television Theatre - Miss Mabel* (1953), *The Motorola Television Hour - A Dash of Bitters* (1954), *Robert Montgomery Presents - Great Expectations Parts 1 and 2* (1954), *Kraft Television Theater - Professor Jones and the Missing Link* (1954), *Producers Showcase - Noel Coward’s Red Peppers* segment (1954), *Playwrights ‘56 - Adam and Evening* (1956), *Alfred Hitchcock Presents - There was an Old Woman* (1956), *Climax - Deadly Climate* (1957) and *The Mad Bomber* (1957), *Kraft Television Theatre - The Woman at Night Hollow* (1958), *Alfred Hitchcock Presents - Bull in a China Shop* (1958), *Shirley Temple’s Storybook - The Magic Fishbone* (1958), *The Donna Reed Show - Miss Lovelace Comes to Tea* (1959), *Five Fingers - The Men with Triangle Heads* (1959).



It was in 1956 that Estelle graced London’s West End for the first time in more than two decades. The production was *Gigi* and starred Leslie Caron in the title role, the role which she was to reprise in the Academy Award winning musical film version in 1958. However, she was anxious to get back to the warmer climate in California which she had grown to enjoy.

During this sojourn in England she was signed by 20th Century Fox to play the barmaid in the Van Johnson starrer *23 Paces to Baker Street* (1956). This was filmed on location in London and is an absorbing suspenseful drama which stands up very well today.

Estelle returned briefly to the American stage that year in *Speaking of Murder* and then in

1958 she played Mrs. Early, the dipsomaniac housekeeper in Universal’s *This Happy Feeling* which starred Debbie Reynolds, Curt Jurgens, Alexis Smith, Troy Donohue and John Saxon. This is a delightful film with Estelle at the top of her form in a much loved role. Who can forget her “Foreign Legion Cocktail, complete with a cup of sand?” Only Estelle could get away with such a line and make it work.

