Tone, Franchot (1905-1968) Encyclopedia Article

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In the succinct words of David Thomson, "Tone was perhaps all that Franchot had—that and Joan Crawford," the first of his four wives. Born the son of a wealthy industrialist in Niagara, New York, and educated at Cornell, Franchot Tone had a distinguished stage career, working with the Group Theater among others. His film career, however, although long and prolific (1933 to 1965), consigned him to roles as wealthy café-society sophisticates, weak cads, or the losing end of love triangles in archetypal romances of the 1930s and 1940s. In 1935 he was Oscar-nominated for a supporting role in *Mutiny on the Bounty,* and married Crawford "after one of the most denied, affirmed, and re-denied romances Hollywood had ever witnessed," as one columnist commented. Unhappy with his film roles, he returned to Broadway, starring in Ernest Hemingway's *The Fifth Column* in 1940, but was soon back in Hollywood. Although he lacked the necessary screen charisma for leading-man stardom, he worked with many of the top directors, including John Ford, Von Sternberg, and Billy Wilder. He made several films with Crawford, and was with Jean Harlow in *Bombshell* (1933) and Bette Davis in *Dangerous* (1935), but gave his most memorable performances towards the end of his career and his life: the dying president in Otto Preminger's *Advise and Consent* (1962) and the grim Ruby Lapp in Arthur Penn's *Mickey One* (1965).

Further Reading:

Jarvis, Everett G. *Final Curtain: Deaths of Noted Movie and TV Personalities.* New York, Carol Publishing Co., 1995.

Shipman, David. *The Great Movie Stars: The Golden Years.* New York, Crown, 1970.