

Where do I begin? It's a journey full of challenges, surprises, sorrow and joy, you know, LIFE. My passion for dance became my profession. After three seasons at Kenley Players in Ohio (a superb training ground) and a brief marriage that gave me my beloved son, I "escaped" to New York in fierce determination to make a career in theater. I got work right away in regional theaters, then did two Broadway flops which were again, great learning experiences. My biggest credit to date is/was playing Sheila in *A CHORUS LINE*'s First National Company, and for many other producing entities, including a world tour which took me literally around the globe - Paris, Berlin, Hong Kong, Singapore, all four islands of Japan, Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, New Zealand then back home to Los Angeles where I had moved in the late seventies.

I was back and forth a couple of times living in NY & LA, usually work related. A major turning point was the 1993 diagnosis of an advanced cancer which required aggressive treatment, leaving me with permanent chronic side effects and slowing me down considerably. As a yoga student since the 70s I felt that my physical, mental and emotional recovery would be enhanced by becoming an instructor and was certified in 1997 by the prestigious Integral Yoga Institute in Manhattan, given the Sanskrit name Prabha, "the light of true knowledge, radiance." I got so much out of teaching in both NY and LA, winding down in 2017 after I'd moved to the San Bernardino mountains for rest and semi-retirement. I still practice every morning with meditation, prayer and asanas. Never one to give up, I began writing seriously and have a respectable body of work: some online yoga articles, a short story collection, and collaborative play which had two successful productions at the NoHo Arts Center (LA Times favorably mentioned my story line in their review). I adapted that piece into my first short film as director and star and was just beginning to submit to festivals when the Covid shut-down interrupted my momentum. A pilot of mine was recently pitched to a major agency/production company, Circle of Confusion and I wait ... Moving to Albuquerque, New Mexico last year was a big change but I'm settling in slowly as we are still not out of this pandemic thing. My son is an amazing father and I'm an award-winning grandmother of the Fab Four as I affectionately call them. I continue to write, have a PBS/National Geographic kind of project which really excites me. Starting a first draft

of a feature film because even if someone likes your work they always say, “What else do you have?”

Single forever, came close a couple of times but haven't remarried. I stay busy and give of myself to family, friends and community. The planet needs our attention and the environment deserves our very best apologies and care. If you're not on board, get with the program, people!

Many thanks to Jerry & Jane and all who have put this together. Best to you all.

Penelope Smyser Richards

P.S. You can see me as a spooky nun in *THE CHOSEN*, released by Terror Films. It was a Netflix top ten in the horror genre for almost a year. Nothing glam about my appearance, for sure, but it's great, scary fun.