



Vincent De Paul

by Dianne Bates

When I first encountered Vincent De Paul at Smashbox Studios several years ago during Mercedes Benz Fashion Week, I was a bit suspicious of his ubër charm. This is, after all, a town where few people reveal their true nature for fear of damaging a career. Mickey Rourke lost years of a promising career until he learned to suppress his bad boy attitude and play nicey-nice. Irascible Sean Penn probably gave himself an ulcer being polite at the Oscars.

So I waited and watched the suave, dare I say debonair De Paul on red carpets, at parties, in performance, and during personal conversations – waiting for him to reveal something hidden, a darkness or a mean streak of some kind. But it turns out that the handsome model/actor is really just a warm, nice guy. Go figure! His constant upbeat demeanor is even more remarkable when you consider his background.

Salvatore Vincent De Paul Zannino grew up around dead people.

He was the eighth of nine children born in Baltimore, Maryland 37 years ago to a mortuary scientist father and socialite mother. His father owned several funeral homes in Baltimore and De Paul admits that an environment of death and sadness might have instilled in him a desire to be as happy as possible. The depressing realm was restricted to the mortuary viewing room, though. His parents and siblings have always been warm and supportive – no matter what his career goals have been.

De Paul was a cute boy with an attractive all American look not unlike Beaver Cleaver. De Paul got the luck of the draw, however, De Paul maturing into a great looking guy while The Beav, Jerry Mathers, morphed into a face that is more Borgnine than Beaver. At age six, De Paul got his first modeling gig for a Baltimore department store and with the encouragement of his older model sister, Felicia, continued to get more jobs as a child. But he didn't consider modeling to be a career choice. He wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and become a mortician.

De Paul entered Johns Hopkins University and earned his degree in Epidemiology and Biomedical Ethics and after graduation, moved to Miami to work at Mt. Sinai Medical Center. Then, as with so many other actors, fate played it's hand and changed his career path.

While on sunny South Beach one day, De Paul was approached by legendary fashion designer Gianni Versace (wearing a Gianni Versace swim suit, of course) who asked De Paul if he'd ever done any modeling. De Paul answered yes, but only as a child. That was good enough for Versace and it wasn't long before the aspiring mortician found himself on major fashion runways in Milan and Paris modeling for the ill-fated designer.

De Paul was signed to Wilhemina Creative and eventually appeared in GQ, Vogue (Spain), Cosmo, 8 covers of Men's Health and countless others. He has been featured in the worldwide campaigns that include L'Oreal, Christian Dior, Oscar de la Renta, Fuji, and Guy La Roche. No one had to teach De Paul how to apply makeup for shoots. After all, he knew how to make a corpse look good!

De Paul's first major appearance was in fellow Baltimorean John Waters' classic original Hairspray, playing one of the Corny Collins dancers. His ten-year acting career includes Riding in Cars with Boys, West Wing, Frasier, Sex in the City, Six Feet Under (ironic, n'est ce pas?) and As The World Turns. Most recently he appeared with Peter Bogdanovich in Humboldt County, and with his mentor, Oscar nominated actress Sally Kirkland in the as-yet-unreleased Oak Hill. He attended the premier in February of Memphis Rising: Elvis Returns, and De Paul recently wrapped Raven, in which he plays vampire killer, Dragos. It seems he just can't avoid the dead...er.... the undead.

Vincent De Paul also continues to model and divides his time between LA and Miami, with frequent visits to his family in Baltimore. When pressed about where he would love to live, the eternally optimistic Italian boy picks Sicily and speaks glowingly about the architecture and culture there. But for now, he's working diligently to propel his film career, having completed twelve films in the last year alone.

The winsome and personable actor can be spotted frequently at LA events. I've observed him helping volunteers put up banners at a charity event even though he was invited talent. Directors have told me about his willingness to pitch in and help on film sets. Whether chatting up Barbara Lazaroff at Spago's Super Bowl Party or talking with the owner of the latest, hippest boutique at the launch party in WeHo, Vincent De Paul can be counted on to have a smile on his face. But what impresses me most is his ability to make anyone he meets feel important and worthy. In a city of broken dreams and lost relationships, this rare trait is as good as gold.

Still, I keep searching for his dark side. It has to be there somewhere.

Dianne Bates has contributed to many publications including the Los Angeles Times, LA Architect Magazine, City and Shore Magazine and most recently, Flaunt. She was one of the first journalists to create her own website, BATES RATES NEWS at <http://dianne-bates.com> where she reviews and comments on just about anything silly humans can conjure up.