



Nader, George (1921-2002)

by Linda Rapp

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Actor George Nader was a popular leading man of the 1950s and 1960s with over fifty films to his credit. Tall and handsome, he had a "beefcake" image.

Although he lived openly with his partner, Mark Miller, Nader did not publicly acknowledge his sexual orientation during his acting career; and Universal, the studio for which he worked, went to great pains to hide it, arranging for him to be seen on dates with beautiful female stars. Only in 1986, after the death of their friend Rock Hudson, did Nader and Miller come out.

Nader was born in Los Angeles on October 19, 1921. He became interested in acting while he was in school. He pursued this interest at Occidental College, from which he earned a degree in English in 1943. After graduation he joined the Navy and served as a communications officer in the Pacific Theater.

When the war ended, Nader returned to California and studied acting at the Pasadena Playhouse. There, in 1947, he met Mark Miller, who had one of the lead roles in a production of *Oh, Susannah!* Nader was in the chorus.

The two fell in love and established a household together. Miller had intended to go to New York to study opera but abandoned his plans in order to stay in California and help Nader launch his career. Miller took various jobs, including working as a carhop and a shoe salesman, in order to provide income while Nader established himself as an actor. By 1952 Nader was successful enough that Miller began working as his business manager.

Nader appeared in his first film, *Rustlers on Horseback* (directed by Fred C. Brannon), in 1950. His first starring role came the next year in Rod Amateau's *Monsoon*.

Another of his early films was the 3-D *Robot Monster* (1953, directed by Phil Tucker). Shot in only four days for a mere sixteen thousand dollars, it took in over a million dollars in its first run but also earned the dubious distinction of being named one of the fifty worst movies in history. It has become a cult classic.

In 1954 Nader won a Golden Globe award as Most Promising Male Newcomer of the year. He went on to leading or co-starring roles in several major pictures, such as *Six Bridges to Cross* (1955) and *Away All Boats* (1956), both directed by Joseph Pevney.

Often, however, Universal, the studio to which he was under contract, used him in second features. Choicer roles frequently went to more heavily-promoted stars such as Rock Hudson and Tony Curtis.

Although Nader and Miller were living together, neither publicly acknowledged his homosexuality. The studio, eager to project a heterosexual image for their "beefcake" star, used various ploys such as arranged dates for Nader with actresses Mitzi Gaynor, Martha Hyer, and Piper Laurie.

One publicist even went so far as to suggest that to avoid being outed by a scandal-sheet such as *Confidential*, Nader should marry and then get a divorce a few years later. A female secretary was willing to participate in the scheme. Nader and Miller discussed the possibility, but Nader could not bring himself to take part in such a sham.

In 1958 Nader decided to leave the studio and work freelance. He landed lead roles in three television series, all short-lived. He played the detective hero in *The Further Adventures of Ellery Queen* during the 1958-1959 season. The next year he portrayed a scientist in *The Man and the Challenge*. In 1961 he played the title role in *Shannon*, a program about an insurance claims investigator.

Not satisfied with professional opportunities in the United States, Nader decided to explore the European market. In 1964 he and Miller moved to Germany, where Nader made a dozen films, including a series of eight in which he played a tough FBI agent. Although the films were popular, they were not of especially good quality. In 1972 Nader and Miller moved back to the United States.

Nader resumed his Hollywood career, but when he suffered a detached retina in an automobile accident, he was no longer able to work under the lights. Miller planned to get a job in real estate to support the couple, but Rock Hudson hired him as his secretary.

Hudson had known Nader and Miller since 1951, when, as a newcomer to Hollywood, he was befriended by the couple, with whom he remained close over the years. Nader and Miller would provide important support to Hudson, particularly in his final battle against AIDS, from which he died in 1985. Hudson left most of his estate to Nader and Miller.

In 1978 Nader wrote his first novel, a homoerotic science-fiction work entitled *Chrome*, which has gone to six printings. The story of forbidden love between a human and a beautiful robot, who are eventually exiled to different parts of the universe, can be read as a metaphor for the societal pressures on gay men.

Nader and Miller collaborated on a second novel, *The Perils of Paul*, about gays in Hollywood. Rumored to be based on the couple's actual experiences, it is forthcoming.

In retirement, Nader and Miller lived in Palm Springs, California. In September 2001, Nader contracted a bacterial infection and died on February 4, 2002.

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