

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 17, 2009

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**Pasadena, CA**—The Trustees and staff of the Norton Simon Museum acknowledge our deep sense of loss with the death of Mrs. Jennifer Jones Simon (March 2, 1919–December 17, 2009), who passed away on December 17, 2009, at her home in Malibu, California. Generous arts patron, esteemed actress, and widow of industrialist and Museum founder Norton Simon, Mrs. Simon served as Chair of the Norton Simon Museum from 1989 and became Chair Emeritus in 2003.

“Jennifer Jones Simon enjoyed an illustrious film career,” notes Norton Simon Museum President Walter W. Timoshuk. “Another important legacy is her leadership role in the Norton Simon Museum, where she initiated the Museum’s celebrated gallery renovation by architect Frank Gehry and spearheaded the development of the Museum’s public programming and outreach initiatives.”

**About Jennifer Jones Simon**

Jennifer Jones Simon (née Phylis Lee Isley) was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma on March 2, 1919. She studied drama and speech at the Benedictine school, Monte Cassino Junior College, then spent a year as a Drama student at Northwestern University. She then attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York, where she met her first husband, Robert Hudson Walker, who later starred in such films as *One Touch of Venus*, *Strangers on a Train*, and *My Son John*. They married in 1939 and had two sons, Robert Walker and the late Michael Walker. They divorced in 1945.



Norton Simon and Jennifer Jones Simon,  
c. 1981

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In the early 1940s, Jennifer Jones came to Hollywood where her screen test for David O. Selznick, the legendary producer of *Gone with the Wind*, *Rebecca* and other significant films, resulted in a film contract. (Jones would marry Mr. Selznick in 1949 and have one child, the late Mary Jennifer Selznick.) For her first major movie role, Jennifer Jones received the Academy Award for best actress in *The Song of Bernadette* (1944). She went on to star in many other films, including *Duel in the Sun* (1946), *Beat the Devil* (1953) and *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955). Her final film appearance was a cameo role in *The Towering Inferno* (1974).

Several years after David O. Selznick's death in 1965, Jennifer Jones met California industrialist and celebrated art collector Norton W. Simon. After a whirlwind, four-week romance, they married on May 30, 1971, on a chartered yacht in the English Channel. The couple first honeymooned in Hawaii, but Mrs. Simon, sensing her new husband's restlessness there, suggested they move on to India. It was there that Mr. Simon began a passion for collecting South and Southeast Asian art, which lasted the rest of his life and formed a significant part of the Norton Simon collections.

In addition to her film work and family life, Jennifer Jones Simon dedicated her time and energy to serving others. During the Korean War, she received a patriotic award for visiting wounded American soldiers in Japan and Korea, as well as a citation from the American Red Cross for compassion shown to American soldiers. She spearheaded fundraising campaigns for mental health research, hereditary disease and cancer research—causes dear to her heart—and served as a Trustee of the Jennifer Jones Simon Foundation, The Norton Simon Foundation, the Norton Simon Art Foundation, and the Norton Simon Museum of Art, as well as on Boards of The J. Paul Getty Trust, Hereditary Disease Foundation and American Health Foundation.

After Norton Simon's death in 1993, Mrs. Simon became involved with the operations of the Norton Simon Museum and, as Chairman of the Board, worked with other Trustees to increase the Museum's programming and public outreach. Most notably, Mrs. Simon collaborated with renowned architect Frank O. Gehry on the renovation of the Museum's galleries, which was completed in 1999.

Mrs. Simon is survived by her son, Robert Walker, eight grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. Memorial services will be private. In lieu of flowers, the family has asked that contributions can be made to the Norton Simon Museum or the Hereditary Disease Foundation.

### **Jennifer Jones Simon's Film Career:**

As Phylis Isley	1939	<u>New Frontier</u> (Republic)
		<u>Dick Tracy's G-Men</u> (Republic)
As Jennifer Jones	1943	<u>The Song of Bernadette</u> (20 <sup>th</sup> Century Fox) <i>Won the Academy Award for Best Actress</i>
	1944	<u>Since You Went Away</u> , Selznick (United Artists) <i>Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress</i>
	1945	<u>Love Letters</u> (Paramount) <i>Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress</i>
	1946	<u>Cluny Brown</u> (20 <sup>th</sup> Century Fox) <u>Duel in the Sun</u> , Vidor/Selznick (Selznick) <i>Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress</i>
	1948	<u>Portrait of Jennie</u> , Selznick (Selznick)
	1949	<u>We Were Strangers</u> , John Huston (Columbia) <u>Madame Bovary</u> , Vincente Minnelli (MGM)
	1950	<u>The Wild Heart</u> aka <u>Gone to Earth</u> (RKO)
	1952	<u>Carrie</u> (Paramount) <u>Ruby Gentry</u> , King Vidor (20 <sup>th</sup> Century Fox)
	1953	<u>Beat the Devil</u> , John Huston (United Artists)
	1954	<u>Indiscretion of an American Wife/Stazione Termini</u> (Columbia)
	1955	<u>Love is a Many-Splendored Thing</u> (20 <sup>th</sup> Century Fox) <i>Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress</i> <u>Good Morning Miss Dove</u> (20 <sup>th</sup> Century Fox)
	1956	<u>The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit</u> , Zanuck (20 <sup>th</sup> Century Fox)
	1957	<u>The Barretts of Wimpole Street</u> (MGM) <u>A Farewell to Arms</u> , Selznick (MGM)
	1961	<u>Tender is the Night</u> (20 <sup>th</sup> Century Fox)
	1966	<u>The Idol</u> (Embassy)
	1969	<u>Angel Angel Down We Go/Cult of the Damned</u> (AIP)
	1974	<u>The Towering Inferno</u> (20 <sup>th</sup> Century Fox)

### **Remarks on Jennifer Jones Simon from notable persons:**

“She put herself completely in the hands of the director more than any other actress I have worked with....Jennifer took what you gave her and made it distinctly her own.”—John Houston

“She discovered the great secret of giving of herself both as a person and as an actress.”

—Gregory Peck, with whom she made two films

“Jennifer is extremely shy. Compared to her, Garbo would seem a screaming extrovert. I can’t imagine how it ever occurred to her to be an actress; it must be that her tremendous talent refused to be denied.” —Joseph Cotton, with whom she made three films

“Had I seen her in nothing more than *Good Morning Miss Dove* I would never have forgotten her...no matter what the role I wait to see Jennifer Jones, always certain of being thrilled and enchanted...she is like a coin fresh from the mint, whether playing the angel, the bitch, the minx, or just her thousand-year-old self.”—Henry Miller

#### **Organizations with which Jennifer Jones Simon was affiliated:**

- **Norton Simon Museum of Art:** Chair Emeritus and Trustee (1976–2007)
- **The Norton Simon Foundation:** Chair Emeritus and Trustee (1979–2007)
- **Norton Simon Art Foundation:** Trustee (1972–2007)
- **Jennifer Jones Simon Foundation:** Chairman and Trustee (1979–2003)
- **The J. Paul Getty Trust:** Trustee (1984–1992)
- **Hereditary Disease Foundation:** Trustee and Lifetime Director
- **Commission for the Control of Huntington’s Disease American Health Foundation, Institute for Health Maintenance:** Trustee (to 1986)
- **National Advisory Mental Health Council of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration:** Member (1982–1986)
- **National Institute of Neurological Communicative Disease and Stroke:** Council Member (1979–1982)
- **Public Committee on Mental Health:** Member of Board of Directors
- **Johns Hopkins Medical School Psychiatry and Neuroscience Development Councils:** Member
- **Board of Sponsors, World Federation of Mental Health of World Congress, Washington, D.C.:** Honorary Chairperson for the Congress (1983)
- **John Douglas French Foundation for Alzheimer’s Disease:** Honorary Board of Directors
- **National Advisory Council of Neuropsychiatric Institute and Hospital (UCLA):** Member
- **National TV Programming Council:** Member

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