



LIZ SMITH

# Being Bening, being gracious

**B**e careful what you wish for, the cliché goes. Having aspired from early youth to become stars, people who achieve that status suddenly find themselves imprisoned, unable to walk down the street without being importuned by strangers. The higher their name floats, the greater the levy imposed, the less of ordinary life they can enjoy."

This is critic **Luc Sante** in *The New York Review of Books* discussing **Bob Dylan's** "Chronicles." These warnings about the perils of fame never stop, but also they never stop anyone from seeking it!

**BEFORE THE** Academy Awards, they could have put a red carpet outside West Hollywood's hidden hotel treasure, Le Montrose. One glimpsed **Oprah Winfrey**, next **Renée Zellweger**, then **Christine Baranski** and — *ta-da!* — **Jennifer Aniston**, plus a dozen more top-flight ladies and gents.

These stars flocked in because New York's fabled facialist **Tracie Martyn** had set up shop, giving her deep but gentle "resculpting" facials. Some people arrived at Le Montrose looking as if they'd

already been "done" by Tracie. I guess that's just the glow of stardom. Aniston, in low-slung jeans, tight white top, light tan and no makeup, appeared only to have to shake out her top-knot, apply some lip gloss and go on to the Kodak Theatre.

Just as Jennifer was ready for her facial, a 35-ish looking man (who'd just had his) said to her, tongue-in-cheek, "Hello, I'm **Ernest Borgnine**. These treatments *really* work!" Jennifer laughed heartily.

**AT THE** Vanity Fair party in Morton's, they didn't have **Elizabeth Taylor**, but editor **Graydon Carter** and his minions corralled every other star. This is the acid trip of celebrity get-togethers. People who avoid parties show up for this one. (If **Garbo** lived today, she might come to Morton's once a year!)

We glimpsed **Jay-Z** and **Beyoncé**; **Paul Rudd**; **Reese Witherspoon** and **Ryan Phillippe**; **Meg Ryan**; **Suzanne Somers**; **Hilary Swank**; **Cate Blanchett**; **Jon Voight**; **Sally Kellerman**; **Janet Jackson**; **Faye Dunaway**; **Mischa Barton**; **John Stamos**; **Gael García Bernal**; **Natalie Portman**; **Adrien Brody**; and

### Tom Cruise.

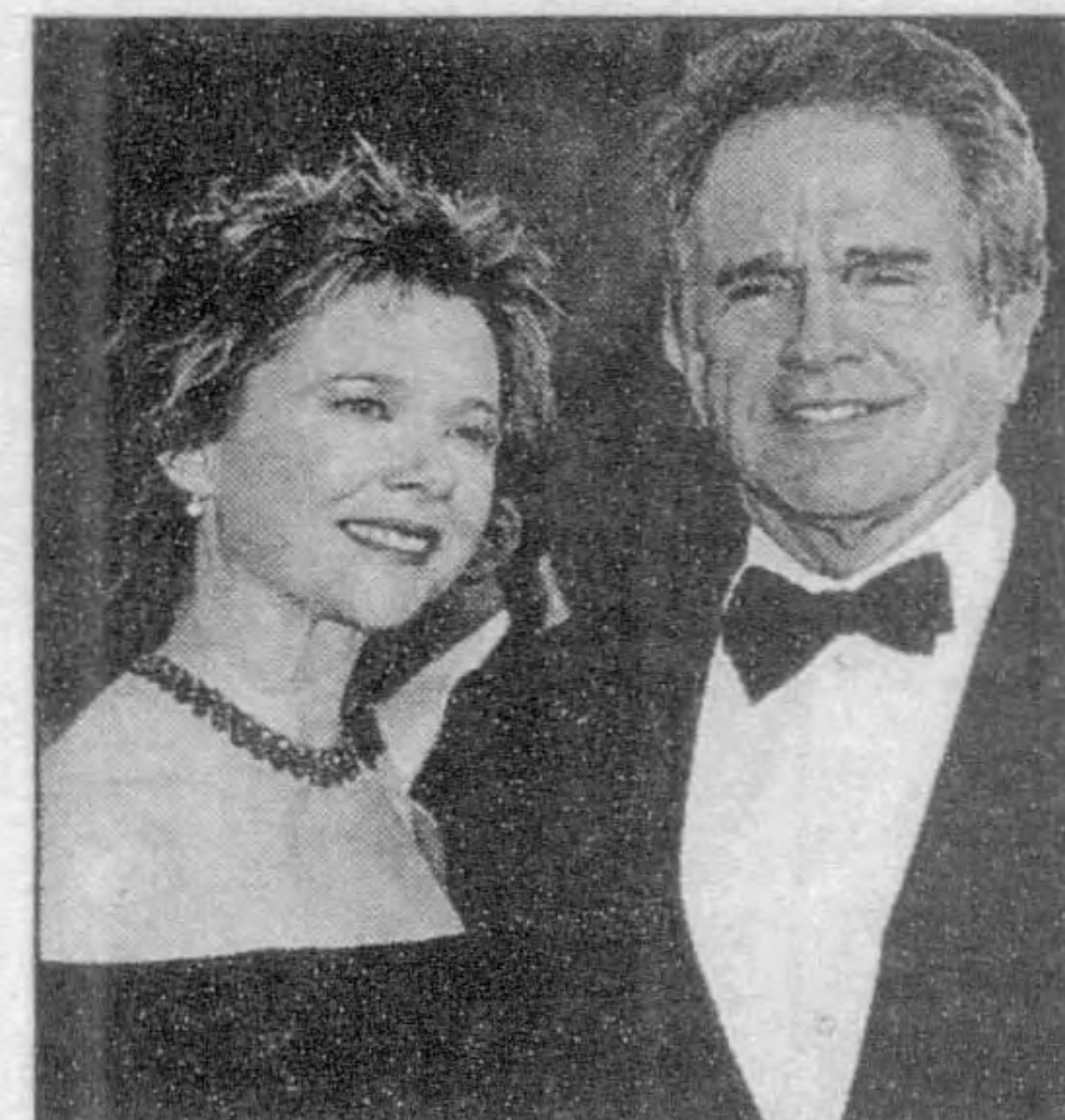
Yes, Tom Superstar himself, who avoided the limo crunch and parked his motorcycle in back of Morton's. Tom did the party in his brown motorcycle jacket. He had a two-day stubble but didn't avoid giving quotes and even let himself be photographed. He accepted a lot of compliments and had a brief exchange with past Oscar winner **Brody**. He congratulated **Harvey Weinstein** on how well he was "chilling out" after "The Aviator" lost on the big ones to "Million Dollar Baby." Giving a quick, warm nod to his ex-girl **Penelope Cruz**, Tom said he had an early call for "War of the Worlds." He winked, saying, "**Steven Spielberg** told me to be careful on my new bike and not break any bones."

When **Annette Bening** and **Warren Beatty** appear together in public, he tends to stand aside a bit, letting his brilliant wife glow on her own. Warren is almost always shy, monosyllabic and wickedly evasive.

But after the awards, as they faced the press outside of Morton's, Warren was tender and protective of Annette. He held her close as if to say, "OK, OK, we're here, but you bet I think

she *should* have won the Oscar!" Annette never looked more regal and classy than she did saying over and over, "Oh, no, no . . ." while being told she was robbed. (As you know, **Hilary Swank** won best actress.) "Desperate Housewives" star **Eva Longoria** skipped the Cosmopolitans and martinis at Morton's, opting for milk and cookies.

**Suzanne Somers** was heard thanking **George Hamilton** for the \$20 he loaned her some years back in Las Vegas when she needed a cab. As George and ex-wife **Alana Stewart** walked off, Suzanne asked, "Why don't you ask this girl to marry you again?" George said, "It works better this way for both of us. Like my jacket, it's 20 years old, and that's how long ago Alana and I were married." Hamilton said he had a date the next day with his longtime friend, **Elizabeth Taylor**. "We're going to the Ivy to celebrate her birthday and that of her son, **Michael Wilding**," **Joan Rivers** said she'd failed to nab an interview with the usually gettable **Paris Hilton**. **Joan** quipped: "I guess I'm going downhill after this. I can only go up from here." **Larry Hagman** was seen at



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**Annette Bening with protective hubby Warren Beatty**

**Norby Walters** "Night of 100 Stars" in the Beverly Hills Hotel. The "Dallas" star said, "I've never come to one of these things; I'm not on the A list. I'm not doing anything these days, which is exactly what I want to do. I don't have to do anything when I grow up. I'm rich!"

**CHRIS ROCK** looked great as host of the Oscars but failed to score or dominate in the manner of his predecessors. Watching the show in the company of four adults and two children, I had a swell time, and for the first time in my life won the voting ballot with 15 correct selections — not necessarily my own wishes but my intuition. My favorite win? **Blanchett** for supporting actress in "The Aviator."

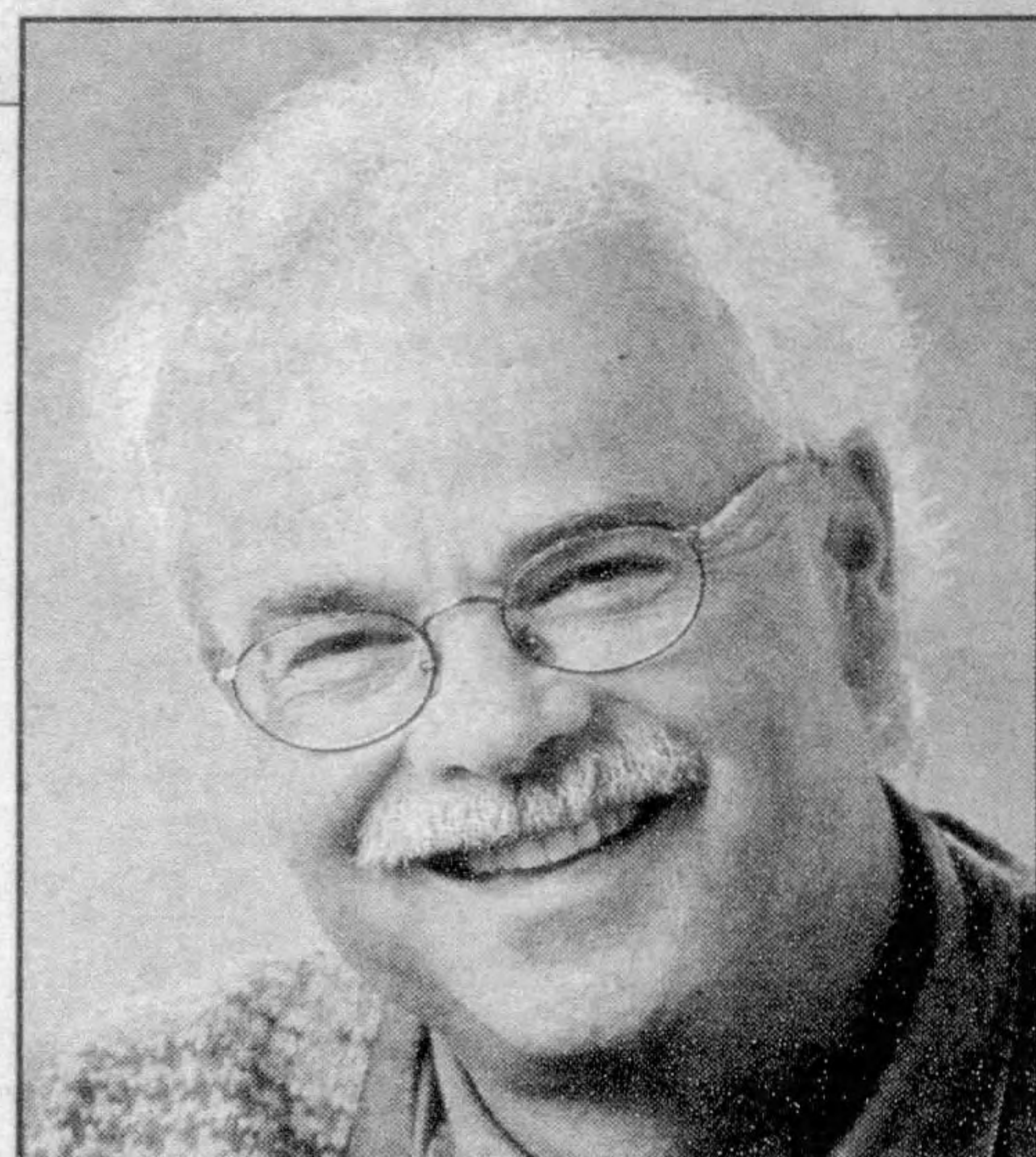
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