

McLean County Museum of History

Beyond Normal Films Collection

Processed by
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Fall 2018

Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	2 Boxes
COLLECTION DATES:	1996-2018
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	

Brief History

Beyond Normal Films (BNF) was founded in 1996 as a not-for-profit group to work in conjunction with the Normal Theater manager. The impetus behind the creation of Beyond Normal Films included founding members Charline Watts and Colleen Farlee. Its main purpose was to augment the Normal Theater's regular line-up of classic films by offering foreign language, independent, and documentary films to the Bloomington-Normal community. The organization was advisory. The evolving primary mission of Beyond Normal Films became two-fold: (1) to provide cultural and educational activities in support of the cinema arts in Bloomington-Normal and Central Illinois, and (2) to recommend to the Normal Theater unique international, independent, and documentary films of artistic quality.

BNF, through its Board of Directors, recommended films from which the Theater manager selected those to be screened. These were designated "BNF Choice" films. In addition, BNF gave its members quarterly film screenings called "Cinema Sessions" (named for deceased Board member Jean Sessions). Additionally annual or semi-annual film festivals (originally called Showcase, then the Farlee Film Festival) were held. BNF was supported through membership dues and revenue from advertising space in its quarterly newsletter (a newsletter was not produced every year).

Several factors contributed to the 20-year success of Beyond Normal Films. The community had no other venue for independent and foreign-language films, and not everyone could travel to Champaign-Urbana to see such films. Members' support and appreciation was enthusiastic, and they enjoyed seeing films in the historic setting of the Normal Theater. In later years, however, the availability of these types of films was not limited to movie theaters, with the rise of DVDs and streaming, in particular. Plus people became less inclined to leave the comfort of their homes and their wide-screen televisions, and attendance at BNF Choice and Film Festival screenings dropped.

The Board struggled to address these issues, which were beyond their control. They queried the BNF membership about their preferences in order to recommend to the Normal Theater manager titles which people would be more apt to attend. They added projects to their mission statement. The Board developed the Cinema Arts Project (CAP) Fund. Through the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation, they awarded grants to individuals or organizations and helped support the Asian Film Festival. Additionally, BNF members raised \$10,000 to support funding for the Roger Ebert statue located outside the Virginia Theater in Champaign.

More contentious was the relationship with the Normal Theater management once that position was redefined by the Town of Normal. The number of BNF Choice films declined greatly. Ultimately, it all became too much for the ten-to-twelve volunteer members of the Board of Directors, and after months of discussion, they voted to disband the organization at the end of its 21st year.

Scope

The collection includes some newspaper clippings from 1996 through 2018 about the organization, and letters to the membership. The work of the BNF Board is detailed in meeting minutes spanning 1998 through 2017 and notes from meetings with Normal Theater management. Scrapbooks in three-ring binders compiled by Colleen Farlee from 1996 through 2017 provide yearly overviews of films screened and activities of the organization.

Box and Folder Inventory

Box 1

Folder 1: History

- 1.1 Press Release: New Group to Sponsor Foreign Film Il Postino at Normal Theater November 19. This press release announces the first film screened by the newly organized Beyond Normal Films in 1996.
- 1.2 "Committee brings art films," *Daily Vidette*, January 13, 2003. Interview with Colleen Farlee, president of Beyond Normal Films.
- 1.3 Letter to BNF members from Board of Directors with membership renewal form, 2004.
- 1.4 Letter to BNF members from Board of Directors in response to concerns raised. Letter reiterates the mission of BNF and its relationship with the Normal Theater Manager, 2016, 2 copies.
- 1.5 Letter to BNF members from Board Officers announcing BNF to cease operations at the end of 2017, dated September 15, 2017.
- 1.6 Email from Board President to Board members describing emails from two members in response to the September 15 letter.
- 1.7 "Beyond Normal's last picture show?" *The Pantagraph*, September 28, 2017. Describes the rationale, taken mostly from above-mentioned letter, for the demise of Beyond Normal Films.
- 1.8 Letter to BNF previous Board members announcing the demise of Beyond Normal Films and inviting them to the final screening, *The Player* on November 15, 2017, dated October 26, 2017, 2 copies.
- 1.9 "GO! Takes the wrap," *The Pantagraph*, December 28, 2017. Article includes two paragraphs about BNF disbanding.
- 1.10 Invitation postcard for the final Cinema Sessions screening on November 15, 2017.
- 1.11 "All thumbs (up) at the Normal Theater," *The Pantagraph*, August 27, 2015. Article describing the maquette of the statue of film critic Roger Ebert which was given to Beyond Normal Films in thanks for having raised more than \$10,000 for the statue placed outside the Virginia Theater in Champaign-Urbana. This was one of the major projects accomplished by BNF in recent years.
- 1.12 "Thumbs up for new home," *The Pantagraph*, March 4, 2018. Article describes the placement of the Ebert statue maquette after the Normal Theater management decided to no longer display it in their lobby.
- 1.13 Email from Board President to Board members regarding the unveiling of the Ebert maquette at its new location, February 21, 2018.

Folder 2: Board Organization and Procedures

- 2.1 Beyond Normal Films Bylaws and some revisions from July 2009 through the last revision November 2014.
- 2.2 Board position descriptions for 2015 and 2017.
- 2.3 Reimbursement voucher
- 2.4 Compliments labels.

Folder 3: Screenings and Attendance

- 3.1 Cumulative list of BNF Films screened 1996-2017.
- 3.2 Lists of titles screened and attendance figures for the following years: 1999, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2011, 2012.
- 3.3 Titles and attendance figures for 2011 September Showcase, 2012 September Showcase, 2014 BNF Choice, 2014 September Showcase, 2015 Farlee Film Festival, 2017 Spring Farlee Film Festival, 2017 Fall Farlee Film Festival.
- 3.4 History of number of BNF titles screened by the Normal Theater, 2006-2016.

Folder 4: Board Meeting Minutes – Oct 1998-2004

Note: Although the Board met monthly throughout the duration of BNF's existence, some minutes have been lost. The minutes in this folder are for meetings in:

- October 1998
- January-November 1999
- January-October 2000
- August-November 2002
- February-March 2003
- January 2004

Folder 5: Board Meeting Minutes – 2011-2013

Note: Although the Board met monthly, minutes have been lost. The minutes in this folder are for meetings in:

- January-December 2011
- January-November 2012
- January-December 2013

Folder 6: Board Meeting Minutes – 2014-2015

Note: Although the Board met monthly, minutes have been lost. The minutes in this folder are for meetings in:

- January-December 2014
- February-November 2015

Folder 7: Board Meeting Minutes – 2016-2017

Note: Although the Board met monthly, minutes have been lost. The minutes in this folder are for meetings in:

- January-December 2016
- January-November 2017 Note: Nov. 2017 was final meeting of the Board.

Folder 8: Meetings with Normal Theater Manager

Note: After the resignation of the Normal Theater Manager Dawn Riorden, those duties were fulfilled by interim managers Doug Wiggs and Kristal Thomas from the Parks and Recreation Department, until Manager Pete Moore was hired. Adam Fox became the Theater Manager after Moore's resignation.

- 8.1 Notes from meeting with Doug Wiggs and Kristal Thomas, Lynne Chaddon (BNF President), and Jo Mink (BNF Liaison), July 9, 2014.
- 8.2 Notes from meeting with Pete Moore, Doug Wiggs, Kristal Thomas, Jenni Blum, Lynne Chaddon, and Jo Mink, September 3, 2014.
- 8.3 Notes from meeting with Pete Moore, Lynne Chaddon, and Jo Mink, January 21, 2015.
- 8.4 Notes from meeting with Pete Moore, Doug Wiggs, Lynne Chaddon, and Jo Mink, February 23, 2015.
- 8.5 Notes from meeting with Adam Fox, Jenni Blum, Kristal Thomas, Lynne Chaddon, Jo Mink, and Kimmy Sanden, May 21, 2015.
- 8.6 Notes from meeting with Adam Fox, Lynne Chaddon, and Jo Mink, August 11, 2015.
- 8.7 Notes from meeting with Lynne Chaddon, Jo Mink, Adam Fox, and James Wayne (Parks and Recreation Dept), November 16, 2015.
- 8.8 Notes from meeting with Adam Fox, Colleen Farlee (BNF Vice-President), and Jo Mink, February 8, 2016.
- 8.9 Notes from meeting with Adam Fox, Shelleigh Birlingmair, Mary-Margaret Simpson (BNF President), and Jo Mink, November 30, 2016. Attachment: Adam's assessment of present relationship and future direction between the Normal Theater and BNF. Note: This was the last meeting held between the BNF Board of Directors and the Normal Theater manager.

Folder 9: Cinema Arts Project (CAP)

- 9.1 Announcement of implementation of BNF Cinema Arts Project initiative, November 30, 2016. Includes list of past and upcoming BNF-CAP projects.
- 9.2 Procedures and Proposal Format for CAP grants (revised), November 21, 2014.
- 9.3 Beyond Normal Films Cinema Arts Project Initiative, September 17, 2014, 4pp.
- 9.4 Memo from David Williams to BNF Board about changes in proposed BNF Cinema Arts Projects fund description and procedures, August 6, 2014, 4pp.
- 9.5 Application for the 2015 Asian Film Festival for CAP funding, 3pp.
- 9.6 Program for The 2015 Asian Film Festival.

Loose: Binders compiled by Colleen Farlee, founding member of Beyond Normal Films. These black 3-ring binders/scrapbooks contain newspaper clippings, invitation cards for screenings, information on BNF-Choice films, and ephemera.

1996-1997

1998

1999

2000

2001-2002

Box 2

Loose: Binders compiled by Colleen Farlee, founding member of Beyond Normal Films. These black 3-ring binders/scrapbooks contain newspaper clippings, invitation cards for screenings, information on BNF-Choice films, and ephemera.

2003-2004

2005-2006

2007-2009

2010-2012

2013-2015

2016-2017