

Twyla Tharp

Portland, Jay County

July 1 –

Twyla Tharp was born in Portland, Indiana, and is an American dancer, choreographer, and author. As a young child, Tharp spent a few months each year living with her Quaker grandparents on their farm in Indiana. In 1950, she and her family moved to Rialto, California, where her parents opened a drive-in movie theater, where Tharp worked from the time she was eight years old. Her mother insisted she take dance and music lessons. She continued to study dance at the Vera Lynn School of Dance. In 1963, she graduated from Barnard College in New York City, where she graduated with a degree in art history. That same year, she joined the Paul Taylor Dance Company.

Tharp has choreographed hundreds of productions for dance and ballet, Broadway, film, and television over her fifty-year career. In 1965, Tharp choreographed her first dance, *Tank Dive*, and in 1966, she formed her own company, Twyla Tharp Dance. In 1973, she choreographed *Deuce Coupe* to the music of the Beach Boys for the Joffrey Ballet, which is considered the first crossover ballet. She later choreographed *Push Comes to Shove* (1976), which featured Mikhail Baryshnikov. Her later work includes choreographed shows to the music of Billy Joel, Bob Dylan, and Frank Sinatra.

Among her many honors, Tharp has received two Emmy Awards, 19 honorary doctorates, a Tony Award for Best Choreography, and the Dramatic Desk Award for Outstanding Choreography for the 2002 musical, *Movin' Out*. She was named a Kennedy Center Honoree in 2008 and was inducted into the Academy of Achievement in 1993. At the 1982 Barnard College commencement ceremonies, her alma mater awarded her its highest honor, the Barnard Medal of Distinction.

In 1992, Ms. Tharp published her autobiography, *Push Comes to Shove* and has written *The Creative Habit: Learn it and Use it for Life* and *The Collaborative Habit: Life Lessons for Working Together*. She lives in New York City and continues to create.

For more information about Twyla Tharp, go to: <http://www.twylatharp.org>.

For more information about *Writing Her Story*, go to: <http://www.in.gov/icw/2440.htm>.

Photo: Avedon, Richard. Retrieved from: <http://www.twylatharp.org/bio>



Writing Her Story
31 Women in 31 Days

INDIANA
COMMISSION
for women