



Brookdale Resident Transforms into a Vampire

After awakening from hip replacement surgery, Allen O'Briant told his nurses he wanted to start physical therapy right away in order to become a vampire before Halloween.

This was not an effect of the anesthesia.

This resident at Brookdale Carolina House in Asheboro, North Carolina would like to live forever, but he is not immortal. He would enjoy flying like a vampire, but knows better than to try. In fact, Allen O'Briant has only one vampire ability. He can change his appearance and make you believe he is someone else. He has done this many times.

O'Briant is a retired actor.



A Reason to Resurrect

From his hospital bed, he was focused on his upcoming scheduled performance in the role of Dracula. Michele Martino, the Resident Programs Coordinator at O'Briant's Brookdale community believes this was a key influence on his recovery. "Having the opportunity to act once again gave him a new zest for life and a spark that had not been there previously," she said. O'Briant's rehabilitation moved forward with supernatural speed.

O'Briant is one of the youngest residents at Brookdale Carolina House where he moved four years ago at the age of 61. Many of his neighbors would have no clue about the interesting life he has led unless they visited his suite and saw the autographed photos of celebrity actors lining his walls. During his career, O'Briant has performed in serious dramas, comedies and musicals – acting, singing, and dancing. On stages in New York, New Jersey, Chicago and Atlanta he has played both the hero and the villain. But he always preferred the villain.

O'Briant participates in the Resident Programs Leadership Forum at his Brookdale community where new activity ideas are brainstormed. In one of those meetings in August of last year, he revealed his desire to play an immortal role in a haunted house.

Brookdale's Michele Martino knew about O'Briant's background. She contacted Jimmy Hill, the producer at Mountain of Terror, a haunted attraction that draws tourists from all over the southeastern United States. She explained what she wanted to do for O'Briant and Hill agreed immediately. The actor would get his chance to play one of the most iconic villains of all – Dracula.

But there was a plot twist. O'Briant's hip replacement surgery was scheduled just a few weeks prior to his performance.

"The show must go on." That saying originated in the 19th century from the circus. If an animal got loose, or if a performer was injured, the ringmaster and the band kept the show going in an upbeat manner so the crowd would not panic. This was the spirit we saw in Allen O'Briant, who would not allow the obstacle of surgery stop the show. His undying desire to play Dracula fueled his rehabilitation therapy at Brookdale.

Dracula Lives Forever

He wanted to play Dracula because he considered that role to be the best villain ever crafted. O'Briant once met Anne Rice, author of the book "Interview with the Vampire," which became a Hollywood movie hit starring

Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt. In an article for the *Asheboro Courier-Tribune*, O'Briant told reporter Julie Bates about his encounter with Rice. "She came up in a black car, wearing all black. She had a sense of humor and the whole bit," he said.

O'Briant believes that most people are fascinated with vampires because they want to be immortal. He mused in the *Courier-Journal*, "I would like to live forever," he said, "but you can't live forever."

Optimum Life Instead of Immortality

Playing Dracula did not give Allen O'Briant immortality – but it did give him optimum life. He was given a challenge to overcome and a motivation to recover his physical strength.

Once again he became a star, providing entertainment for a whole new generation. "He had such a blast," Martino said. "He's still walking on Cloud Nine."

O'Briant's experience reminds us of Shakespeare's lines from the play "As You Like It" –

*All the world's a stage,
and all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
and one man in his time plays many parts,
his acts being seven ages.*

At every Brookdale community we help our residents age well by understanding who they are, then customizing a script of programs and activities tailored for their talents. They can awake each morning to the golden light of a sunrise that promises them a new role to play in the next act of life.

