

**S**ONG and dance legend Ann Miller is stuck in a tragic two-step with osteoporosis. The chronic bone disease has caused part of Miller's spine to collapse, and the once-5-foot-6 beauty has shrunk to a diminutive 5-foot-1.

"I had three disks collapse in my spine and now it's disintegrating," the 80-year-old actress tells GLOBE. "I lost half a foot in just one year. It's unbelievable."

Thrice married and divorced Miller says with heels she used to come up past the shoulder of her longtime beau, 6-foot-4 Morgan Woodward – but no longer.

"I used to be 5-foot-6, but now I'm a shrimp," she admits. "It's very odd to see Morgan and me standing next to each other. This osteoporosis business is really something. There's nothing you can do but to keep smiling."

Miller started dancing when she was just 5 years old and first appeared on the silver screen in 1934's *Anne of Green Gables* at age 11. She went on to star in such classics as *Stage Door*, *Easter Parade* and *Kiss Me Kate*. She also wowed 'em on stage in the smash hits *Mame*, *Sugar Babies* and *Follies*.

"I stopped dancing five years ago," Miller notes. "And that's when the osteoporosis started."

Now that most of her old wardrobe no longer fits her dwindling frame, the bighearted entertainer has

# ANN MILLER: MY BATTLE WITH CRIPPLING BONE DISEASE



Ann Miller doesn't stand as tall as she once did alongside her beau Morgan Woodward

Legendary hooper is the incredible shrinking woman



figured out a way to turn her misfortune into a windfall for others. She's donated more than \$300,000 worth of her clothes to the Motion Picture Home in Woodland Hills, Calif. And in October, the prestigious home for aging stars will host a fashion show called *The Ann Miller Collection* with celebrities modeling her classic outfits.

"Ann is such a delight," a close friend of Miller tells GLOBE. "In spite of it all, her positive spirit and good humor still shine through."

Even with a dauntless attitude, the still-spunky star has found osteoporosis to be a difficult adjustment after such an active life.

"It feels so strange to be literally shrinking before my very eyes," she confesses. "I do feel fine most of the time, except right before it rains when my back starts to hurt from the humidity."

"It's rough, but I just keep going. When I eat in restaurants, they give me a cushion to sit on so I can reach the table. And in my car, I have a cushion so I can look out."

Perhaps the toughest pitfall may be selling her Beverly Hills home, which she bought for her mom in 1949 and GLOBE photographed in 2001.

"The thought of leaving this place is upsetting," Miller says. "But the staircase is 25 steps and it's getting harder and harder for me to manage them."

- ROBIN MIZRAHI

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