

Obituary: Hollywood Legend Elizabeth Taylor is Dead at 79

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 23, 2011 - 10:16am

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LOS ANGELES – Elizabeth Taylor, one of the great icons of Hollywood, and known as much for her marriages, personal life and activism as her screen performances, died this morning at the age of 79, as announced by her publicist in Los Angeles.

Born in London, England, in 1932 to American art dealers from St. Louis, Taylor was moved back to the U.S. in 1939. Her unique beauty, which included her famous violet eyes, won her a screen test at age 10 at Universal studios. She made her film debut there ("There's One Born Every Minute"), but her contract was soon dropped and she was hired by Metro-Goldwyn Mayer shortly thereafter.



Early Days: Elizabeth Taylor in an MGM studio pose with Co-star Lassie
Photo credit: MGM

After joining MGM's unforgettable stable of stars, she began her meteoric rise with "National Velvet" (1944), co-starring Mickey Rooney. Hit after hit followed in those studio system days, as she made the transition between child star and young adult roles with ease. Her foray into more adult roles came with "Father of the Bride" (1950) and the more serious "A Place in the Sun" (1951).

It was around her 18th birthday that the long line of marriages began with her wedding to Nicky Hilton, heir to the hotel Hiltons. That marriage lasted 8 months, and was followed in 1952 to Michael Wilding. After divorcing Wilding in 1957, she married producer Michael Todd a month later, and lost him in a plane crash one year later.

During that time she was busy making more substantial films, including the lead female role in "Giant" (1955), co-starring James Dean and Rock Hudson. She was nominated for Best Actress (losing each time) for "Raintree Country" (1957), "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" (1958) and "Suddenly, Last Summer" (1959). She finally won the Oscar for her performance in "BUtterfield 8" (1960).

She was also making tabloid headlines at the time for taking up with Eddie Fisher, a singer who was then married to Debbie Reynolds (and the father to the future Princess Leia Carrie Fisher). The triangle culminated with Fisher divorcing Reynolds and marrying Taylor, one of the first

public affairs carried out and reported through the media.

She also had several health issues that made headlines. She nearly died in the late 1950s during a surgical procedure, and fought addiction, weight and a myriad of circumstantial injuries and maladies which plagued her throughout her life.

Controversy came next in the form of the production of “Cleopatra” (1963). Not only was it ruining the fortunes of 20th Century Fox (the cost overruns were legendary), but Taylor was threatening her latest marriage by connecting with the mercurial Richard Burton. She divorced Fisher in 1964, and married Burton for the first time (she later remarried him after they divorced in the mid-1970s, only to divorce him again). Along the way Burton and Taylor co-starred in director Mike Nichol’s “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf” (1966), which earn Taylor her second Best Actress Academy Award.



Power Couple: Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor in ‘Cleopatra’
Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

Burton and Taylor would star in six other films together during the 1960s, but Taylor’s box office power dimmed by the end of that decade, and she spent the rest of her career in lackluster films such as “Ash Wednesday” (1973) and “The Blue Bird” (1976). After several other smaller film roles and TV appearances (including voicing baby Maggie’s first word on “The Simpsons”), Taylor made her final film appearance in “The Flintstones” (1994).

Her later years were characterized by her activism in fighting the AIDS epidemic. She co-founded the American Foundation for AIDS research, raising tremendous amounts of money and awareness for the cause. She was awarded a special Academy Award in 1993 for her efforts.

She was married two more times, to Senator John Warner in 1976 (divorced 1982) and for the eighth time in 1991 to Larry Fortensky, whom she divorced in 1996. Throughout her marriages, she had four children and nine grandchildren.

According to her publicist, Elizabeth Taylor passed away due to congestive heart failure, with her children by her side.

*Source material for this article came from Wikipedia and imdb.com.
Elizabeth Taylor, 1932-2011.*



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