

Paul Newman Dies at 83 as a Cool Hand Who's Cooler Than You, Me

Submitted by [HollywoodChicago.com](http://www.hollywoodchicago.com) [1] on September 28, 2008 - 2:16pm

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CHICAGO – He was cooler than you. He was cooler than me. He was Cool Hand Luke. Paul Newman – an activist, philanthropist, race car driver and one of the most legendary movie stars of the post studio system era – died on Friday of cancer at his farmhouse near Westport, Conn.

He was 83. I knew about Newman early in my life because he was my mother's favorite movie star.

It was an event to see one of his films on TV. The one that connected my mother to him most was the "The Young Philadelphians" in 1959. In it, Newman plays a young and idealistic lawyer who seemed the epitome of the late 1950s skinny-suit era. He was the ideal man.

Newman began his career in the Marlon Brando-style method acting period in the 1950s.

He fit as well into a torn T-shirt as he did in a skinny suit. Following stints in the early days of television, Newman made an infamous debut in the movies with the religious-themed film "The Silver Chalice" in 1954. Though derided, the color film did highlight the famous blue eyes that would become his calling card.

Following his breakthrough character role as Rocky Graziano in "Somebody Up There Likes Me" in 1956, Newman embarked on a series of roles that established his star power. That period included "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" (1958), "Rally 'Round the Flag, Boys!" (1958), "From the Terrace" (1960) and "The Long Hot Summer" (1958), which is the film where he met Joanne Woodward.

She has been Newman's wife of 50 years. Another breakthrough came in 1961 with "The Hustler".

Newman's "Fast Eddie" Felson character began a series of American anti-hero roles that would define him as both film archetype and real-life cool cat. Through the 1960s, he would play complex and interestingly flawed characters in "Hud" (1963), "Harper" (1966), "Hombre" (1967) and "Cool Hand Luke" (1967), which is the hottest of them all.

But he saved the best for last in that tumultuous decade when he co-starred with rising star Robert Redford in "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" (1969).

The wise-guy western, which was shot with a wry nod to the glorification of the outlaw life, linked Newman and Redford for the rest of their lives. After reuniting in "The Sting" (1973), Redford regretted that he could never find a proper script thereafter for the pair to work together again.

Newman's last great anti-hero role was as the aging minor league hockey player Reg Dunlop in "Slap Shot" (1977). It was a profane comedy that perfectly captured the rust belt ruin of America. Newman was 52 at the time.

Denied an Academy Award after seven nominations, he received his first acting win one year after the academy gave him an honorary nod. Reprising his role as "Fast Eddie" Felson in "The Color of Money" (1986), Newman again co-starred with another rising star (Tom Cruise) and took home the best-actor Oscar. Though some called it a career award, nobody deserved it more.

But acting in movies wasn't the only contribution Paul Newman gave the world.

His Newman's Own series of food products (a small company that started with a salad dressing) turned into a multimillion-dollar enterprise that pledged all of its profits to charity. It's estimated that he has raised \$200 million for charity overall mostly to establish his "Hole in the Wall Gang" camps for severely ill children.

Newman also was one of the great liberal activists. He worked hard for Eugene McCarthy during the 1968 campaign and even made the enemy list of U.S. President Richard Nixon. Newman liked to say it was one of his proudest achievements. He also raced cars professionally.

Working less frequently in his later years, he retired from acting in 2007 while citing his advancing years. "It's pretty much a closed book for me," he said.

With his long career and fulfilled life, Newman became a recognizable image for three generations of moviegoers. He was the ideal man for

my mother, the anti-hero for me and even was the wise old car in an animated film ("Cars") for my nieces and nephews.

But through it all, Paul Newman was his own man. He reveled in the blessings and flaws of a unique and singular life. Goodbye Hud, Butch, Reg, Harper and Fast Eddie. Goodbye Cool Hand Luke. Paul Newman was a natural born world shaker. *Sources: Wikipedia, Associated Press, IMDb*

Ten Must-See Paul Newman Films

- ★ "Somebody Up There Likes Me" (1956)
- ★ "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" (1958)
- ★ "The Hustler" (1961)
- ★ "Hud" (1963)
- ★ "Torn Curtain" (Alfred Hitchcock directed, 1966)
- ★ "Cool Hand Luke" (1967)
- ★ "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" (1969)
- ★ "Slap Shot" (1977)
- ★ "The Verdict" (1982)
- ★ "The Color of Money" (1986)
- ★ Plus one more for my mother: "The Young Philadelphians" (1959)



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Source URL (retrieved on Sep 25 2024 - 2:33pm):

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