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Susan Cunningham
PO Box 24
Rockhampton Q 4700

07 4926 5467 | researchandreports.com.au | ABN 28 481 869 679

Golden Jubilee Tribute Planet of the Apes TV series

Approaching the 50th Anniversary of the debut on American TV of the Planet of the Apes TV series, I felt compelled to write about the actors playing our three leads:

Roddy McDowall as Galen, Ron Harper as Alan Virton and James Naughton as Pete Burke.

- What were the influences that shaped them and how did those influences play out?
- What brought each of them to that place in space and time?
- Where did their lives take them later?

This is my golden jubilee tribute to Roddy, Ron and James.

Susan Cunningham

<https://researchandreports.com.au/>



Roddy McDowall played Galen, the young chimp. To understand Roddy and who he was, we must start with his mother and his years as an adolescent star in Hollywood.

Winifred Lucinda Corcoran was born in the small Irish village of Timahoe, County Kildare, Ireland, about 20 km west of Dublin on 9 September 1899. Her father, Charles Edward Corcoran, was 49 and her mother, Christina Mary Dirham, was 39, and she had two older brothers. Unfortunately just 3 years later her father passed away and her mother emigrated with the three children to extended family in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. Winifred grew up in Pittsburgh and married Thomas McDowall there in 1925. Thomas (born 28 Jun 1896) was a British merchant seaman, and the young couple moved to London, England where Thomas then operated a trucking company. On 23 September 1927 Winifred gave birth to a daughter Virginia Grace and less than a year later on 17 September 1928, she gave birth to Roderick Andrew Anthony Jude.



This image and these details were sourced from Ancestry and Find-a-grave websites.

Winifred was a frustrated actress and dealt with this frustration by educating and promoting Virginia and Roddy as child photo and clothing models. Roddy himself said his mother wanted to be a star¹.

"My mother wanted to be in the movies. She was very ambitious, wanting her place in the sun. When she couldn't have it, she did it through me. When I was 4 or 5, my mother used to truck my sister, Virginia, and me up [to London] to learn poetry, Shakespeare, elocution. Virginia and I did modelling, and then I started making English movies. Mother was in heaven."²

By 1940 when he was 12 years old he'd appeared in 15 British films. Upon the outbreak of war between England and Germany, Win (as she was known), Roddy and Virginia moved to the USA. There are several different stories about this move.

Roddy himself said his father wanted them safe with his mother's brother in the USA and went to a lot of trouble to arrange their tickets on the last boat out of England in 1940³.

"We were to live in White Plains, New York, for the duration of the war. But on the boat, old Mom got us two kids to give a concert, and somehow she got some newspaperman on the boat to be there. She wasn't going to live in White Plains, you see. No dust on her. And within two weeks she had found an agent in New York, who ... suggested Mom take me over to Fox at Fifty-Sixth Street, because they were looking for a child for *How Green Was My Valley*."

Extended family have said the family arrived in New York City and moved to Pittsburgh for a short time, where Roddy and Virginia attended local school.

His mother told the newspapers at the time that they fled England as a result of the war and arrived in New York City with £10 (\$42).

Later the studio's story was that Darryl F Zanuck had discovered Roddy in English films and 'brought the family to Hollywood'.

Roddy made 12 movies in 6 years at 20th Century Fox and these included significant roles in **How Green Was My Valley**, **Lassie Come Home**, **My Friend Flicka** and **The Pied Piper**. In two of the others he played minor roles – **The Keys of the Kingdom** and **The White Cliffs of Dover**.

When Roddy became a movie star, his mother became the domineering force in the family unit. She controlled the money and she controlled Roddy's and Virginia's lives. If Win did not get her own way, she would become hysterical; on one occasion she even developed hysterical paralysis. The treating doctor diagnosed hysteria with delusions of grandeur.

"My mother had complete control over us," said McDowall later. "She would make all the decisions and pretend that my sister and I were making them."⁴

Win had a young son who earned good money, had a high profile and could be kept under her thumb. Roddy's father had stayed back in England to fight in the war effort but when Tom finally re-joined the family in 1945, she saw no need for him to find a job, as Roddy was earning far more than Tom ever could.

¹ A Tribute to Roddy McDowall - A Life in Pictures (page 2) <https://www.xmoppet.org/reprints/alife2.htm>

² A Tribute to Roddy McDowall - I Survived Success <https://xmoppet.org/reprints/success.htm>

³ A Tribute to Roddy McDowall - A Life in Pictures (page 3) <https://www.xmoppet.org/reprints/alife3.htm>

⁴ Obituary_ Roddy McDowall _ The Independent <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-rodny-mcdowall-1176240.html>

Meanwhile, Virginia's education, employment and future prospects were totally ignored. It was convenient for Win to have the shy Virginia attend the Red Schoolhouse on the Fox lot, despite her being effectively an outsider there. Roddy and his sister remained close all their lives although Roddy later stated their parents kept Virginia under a strong psychological hold. They both acknowledged the difference in the way Win treated each of them but it did not drive a wedge between them.

Dick Moore⁵ (who had been a movie child star in the silent era) wrote that many child stars careers were wish fulfilment for their parents and the need for money. Further he noted

"Jobs were scarce for our dads. Reliance on our income became the central economic reality in our homes."

When asked about this by Dick Moore, Roddy replied

"That is a thing I do not wish to face. It is that they were wrong. They were wrong to take us children and do that with our lives, to twist our environment in that way and then leave it for us to sort out."

In late 1945 a house was purchased in Cheviot Hills for the family with Roddy's earnings. It was a charming Tudor style home, built in 1938, on an oversized flat lot on one of the Hill's prettiest streets. The property included a swimming pool, cabana and badminton court.

Dick Moore again:

As the children grew up in Hollywood, the McDowall home became a gathering place for teenagers and young adults in films. I was included whether I knew the other guests or not (I seldom did). As a hostess, Winifriede was tops. Her attitude was "The more the merrier."

"That's because she couldn't stand anything going on in somebody else's house, because she couldn't control it," Rod told me.

Roddy's other experiences as a child actor in Hollywood undoubtedly influenced his later life choices. For example, even as a child he was aware of the fickleness of Hollywood success.

"In 1943 he (D W Griffith) was asked by some newspaper what he considered to be a good recent film, and he chose **My Friend Flicka**. It was not really a happy experience, meeting him--he was a poor, sad man by then--but it was still amazing."⁷

D W Griffith, considered one of the most influential figures in the history of the motion picture, was reduced to living in a hotel⁸. This was a salutary lesson about the fickleness of fame, kudos and money in Hollywood, and how quickly fortunes could turn.

⁵ Dick Moore, *Twinkle Twinkle little star but don't have sex or take the car*, 1984

⁶ Dick Moore, *Twinkle Twinkle little star but don't have sex or take the car*, 1984

⁷ A Tribute to Roddy McDowall - A Life in Pictures (page 3) <https://www.xmoppet.org/reprints/alife3.htm>

⁸ <https://vinto.com/blogs/vintage-movie-resources/dw-griffith-star-maker-whose-dreams-turned-to-dust>

Dick Moore again:

Part of the money problem was that our parents wanted nothing to change. Going to college, for example, would be expensive, and worse still, we would learn to question things, a sure sign of growing up. I got to college after World War II because it cost nothing. The G.I. Bill paid for it.

Roddy McDowall didn't go to college because he didn't have the G.I. Bill. He seemed surprised when I asked. "How could I go to college? There wasn't enough money. Who was going to do the work? The problem was very painfully explained to me. 'Of course, dear, you can do anything you want, *but . . .*.'" So Roddy didn't go to college.

But he did leave home. As a young adult, Roddy went to New York to learn to act and live an independent life. Jane Powell, his close friend, urged him to go, still convinced that if he hadn't, he would eventually have had a breakdown.

Like Jane, Roddy left everything with his parents, who, after his departure, rattled around in the big house in Cheviot Hills, ignoring the unused swimming pool:

Roddy told
Dick Moore:

When I moved to New York, I gave my parents everything. Mother sat for years playing canasta. Eventually, I told them they had to sell the house. I could no longer make a living in New York and support the system in Los Angeles.

After I left home, I never really had much money until I did the movie *Cleopatra*, and by that time I had a lawyer in New York to take over the parental role of managing my finances. I had given him power of attorney, which he held for ten years. But still I had no money, although I'd made over a hundred thousand a year.

Eventually, I decided that I needed to learn about dealing with money. I knew nothing, partly because my mother never wanted me to know. My father knew, but he couldn't get at the money. If he hadn't been so mesmerized by my mother, if they'd done what *he* wanted, I would have had every dime I ever made. My father was scrupulously honest. And he was not a gambler. But she had such control over him that he was powerless.

Clearly, while Roddy was not one of those Hollywood children publicly known for having been abused, in fact he was used and manipulated by his mother for her own purposes. His mother made sure the whole family depended on his earnings (and he knew it) while she also made sure he had no coping mechanisms to strike out on his own (e.g. she often expressed a fear that Roddy might be kidnapped, and hence she claimed he needed to be kept close to her at all times, and hence he was socially insulated). He became the family's provider with all the responsibility that entailed, while she gambled and entertained on his dime.

⁹ Moore, D, *Twinkle Twinkle little star but don't have sex or take the car*, 1984

Fellow teenage movie star Jane Powell described Roddy as “like a brother” and observed:

Wynn was a difficult mother for Roddy and his sister, Virginia, but I thought she was wonderful. She was warm and friendly, outgoing and confident. She was intelligent, and I loved being around her.

I loved Wynn, but later, after I married Geary, I realized it was terribly important for Roddy to get away from home. I told him, “You’ve got to get out of town and get away from your mother. That’s the only way you’ll survive.” Wynn had been very good to me, but I could sense what she was doing to Roddy. She was destroying him as a man, as a person, and as a talent. The whole family revolved around Wynn; everybody was under her thumb. Every time the family didn’t do what she wanted, she would feign a heart attack. Roddy was torn—he didn’t want to hurt her. But he had to get away. I, at least, was married, but I believe now that I had married to escape my parents and their unhappiness. It was Roddy’s turn now to escape.

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Roddy’s career virtually died at age 17:

“My agent told me I would never work again, because I’d grown up.”¹¹

Another article records that in 1945, Fox abruptly gave him the boot.

“It was very cruel. I’d been on the studio lot since I was a kid, and suddenly I wasn’t allowed back. I couldn’t even go there and visit! The point was, if you were out, you were out! It was hurtful. Devastating. I was slaughtered inside.”¹²

Roddy knew he had been typecast. He was either

- the earnest English boy with big expressive eyes who survived hardship (**How Green Was My Valley**, **The Pied Piper**); or
- the boy with a horse (**My Friend Flicka**, **Thunderhead**) or a dog (**Lassie Come Home**).

He knew he would need to earn an income as an adult, but his formal education had been secondary to his movie making obligations, and there was no money for a college education. Since movie making was the only field he had experience in, he signed a contract with Lindsley Parsons Inc. (Monogram Studios) to make six films in three years as associate producer and star. These were the B-feature melodramas **Rocky** (another dog movie) and **Kidnapped** (1948), **Black Midnight** (another horse movie) and **Tuna Clipper** (1949), and **Killer Shark** and **Big Timber** (1950).

Finally in 1952 he made **The Steel Fist**, an anti-communist drama for Monogram Studios.¹³

¹⁰ Jane Powell, 1988, *The girl next door--and how she grew*, 1988

¹¹ Obituary <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-rodny-mcdowall-1176240.html>

¹² A Tribute to Roddy McDowall - I Survived Success <https://xmoppet.org/reprints/success.htm>

BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL

Over the next three pages, I'm going to write freestyle (without footnotes) because much of this knowledge has been accumulated over almost 50 years without me keeping references.

I "met" Galen in the Australian spring of 1975 and I've been reading about Roddy ever since. I started off trawling through a stack of old movie magazines Mum kept in a kitchen cupboard and moved on to Marvel Comic articles, and library books, and in recent years the Internet.

Roddy was the preferred escort for many high profile actresses when they needed to be accompanied to an event. He presented well, behaved impeccably, was very conscious of the relationship between the press and the stars, and he understood the double edged sword of photography. He was not predatory and took no liberties, so he was trustworthy.

If I recall rightly, Marilyn Monroe specifically asked for him to accompany her when she went to Chicago on the **Love Happy** tour in 1949 for that very reason. He was also asked to join the local entourage when Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon visited the USA in 1965.

Elizabeth Taylor



Lassie Come Home, 1942.

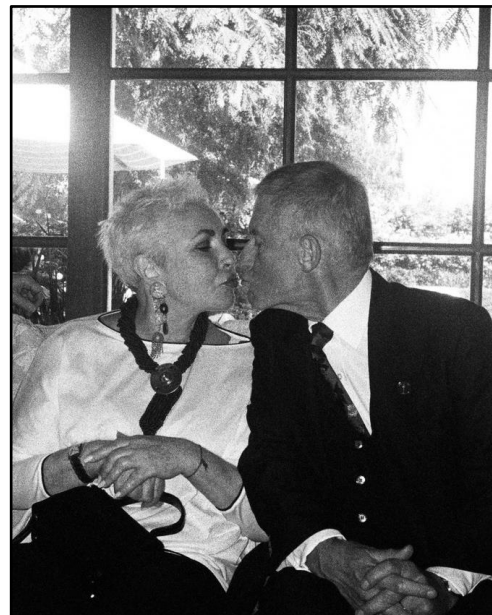


Photo taken 1997 at Taylor's home.

Roddy and Elizabeth met on the set of **Lassie Come Home**, became close and remained close until Roddy died. Roddy and Elizabeth were effectively family to each other.

Roddy was the only person whom she allowed to photograph her nude, the photo being commissioned in 1956 as a gift to her third husband.

In December 1983, when her family staged an intervention to persuade her to get treatment for drug and alcohol abuse, Roddy was included as he was considered one of the family.

Roddy was tasked to break the news to her of the death of Richard Burton.

When asked on **Larry King Live** Who has been there for you all the way in the good and the bad? Elizabeth's answer was "*Roddy McDowall and he's gone*".

She later referred to him as the one friend she had to whom she confided everything, and who was always understanding.

¹³ David Castell, *The Films of Roddy McDowall*,



Photo by Elizabeth Taylor, undated.

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In his response (received on 10 December) to my letter of 8 November, James Naughton stated

“He threw dinner parties. The first one Pam and I attended was the night of POTA’s premiere. ...

Susan Cunningham
PO Box 24
Banyo, QLD 4700

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He invited us again, the next Friday night, but I couldn’t go because I’d promised our children, who were then 3 and 6, that I’d stay home and watch the show with them. I said to Roddy, “We were just with you last Friday night, why would you ask us again so soon?” He just smiled. “Oh” I said “she’s going to be there, isn’t she?” And he nodded. Elizabeth Taylor was going to be there, and I was going to have to miss her. He understood. We never did meet her, as a result.”

I doubt many people would realise just how significant this was. Elizabeth was like a sister to Roddy so he wanted to introduce James and Pam to his family. Over the years Roddy invited many people to his private dinners and lunches, and some by luck of the draw met Elizabeth Taylor.

Roddy was breaking his own protocol by inviting James and Pam again so soon. It could only have been that introducing them to Elizabeth was very important to him.

Jane Powell

Jane Powell was shy and lonely. She met Roddy when filming her third movie, *HOLIDAY IN MEXICO* (1946), and he began inviting her over to his house parties on Sunday afternoons. That was the only place she ever went, Jane said.

"For the first two years in Hollywood, I was really miserable. If it hadn't been for the Sundays at Roddy's, I don't know what I'd have done. I think he saw the loneliness in me."

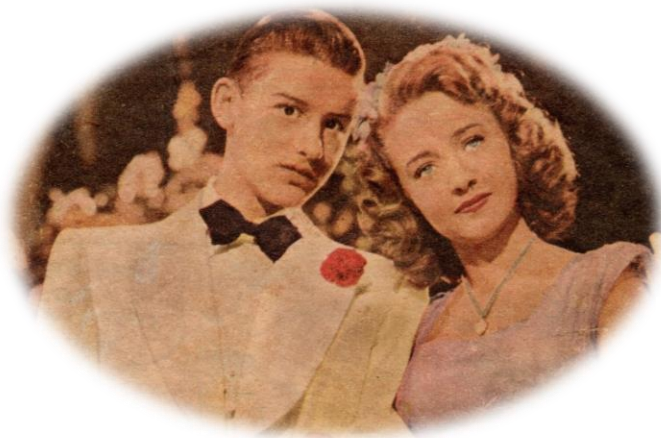


Photo from a scrapbook found in my Mum's kitchen cupboard.

Ava Gardner

I can't write anything about the relationship between Roddy and Ava better than these two existing sources, both of which I recommend you read.

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PO Box 24
Rockhampton Q 4700
ABN 28 481 869 679

Ava's dog Cara



Ava Gardner and Roddy McDowall on the set of *The Ballad of Tam Lin*, circa 1969.

1. Roddy wrote a chapter in Ava's biography "Ava: My story" (see Internet Archive).
2. The Ava Gardner Museum has this online entry:
<https://www.johnstoncountync.org/ava-gardner/blog/post/ava-gardner-and-roddy-mcdowall-loyal-friends/>

New York 1952 to 1972

In 1952 Roddy left the Cheviot Hills house for his parents use and struck out on his own. In 1949 he'd met Montgomery Clift who was now living in New York¹⁴. Having other friends in New York and wanting to be an actor, he moved there. It was a steep learning curve; he didn't even know how to buy a subway ticket because he'd been "protected" so much.

However Roddy continued to send most of his earnings home to his parents who depended on him financially. He needed to find work but he also needed to learn the craft of acting.

Roddy wanted to be an actor, he greatly admired Monty Clift's acting and at Monty's suggestion he began taking acting lessons. This was a hard row to hoe but he persevered, to his great credit and lifelong advantage.

"It was a shattering and revealing experience. But at least I got a chance to fail. Here (Hollywood) you can't afford to fail. And if you don't risk failure you don't grow. I was very lucky because I arrived in New York at a time when live TV was flourishing and I got a chance to play roles that I never would have gotten a crack at in movies. It was sort of like a golden age, that eight years of live TV. It was a breeding ground of great talent. Many of the outstanding writers, directors and actors in Hollywood today came out of it."¹⁵

"I wanted to be a character actor; I wanted to be an actor, and the way to try was to go to New York. And I was very fortunate, because when I got there the great era of live TV was starting. It was so new, and everything moved so fast, you weren't criticized the way you were in a movie. You could fall on your ass. You could be in three flops in a row on Broadway and not starve, thanks to TV."¹⁶

By JOAN E. VADEBONCOEUR

HOLLYWOOD — "In my checkered career," says Roddy McDowall facetiously, "the nadir was the seven months I appeared in vaudeville. I think I killed it."

The bleak period in his life came at age 19 or 20 when he could obtain only movie roles with a "14-year-old's mentality."

So the youth took to the road, playing on the same bill as Shep Fields and his Rippling Rhythm. "I was dreadful was what I was," he admits. "There are ladies present so I can't tell you what a woman screamed at me one time at a midnight show."

In New York, Roddy specialised in doing everything. He did radio, live TV and as much variety as he could in theatre. He believed every actor should try every role and not fear failure. He was there to learn and to earn, and he adopted a philosophy of never knocking back work. He'd either succeed and learn, or fail and learn. He cheerfully admitted to lots of failures.

Syracuse Herald Journal, 19 June 1974, p. 45

¹⁴ Patricia Bosworth, *Montgomery Clift: A Biography*, 1978, p. 160

¹⁵ A Tribute to Roddy McDowall - The Star Who Sought Success
<https://www.xmoppet.org/reprints/parsons.htm>

¹⁶ A Tribute to Roddy McDowall - A Life in Pictures (page 3) <https://www.xmoppet.org/reprints/alife3.htm>

Child Star Fled Filmland To Escape Type Casting

MEET RODDY McDOWALL on Suspicion at 9 p. m. tonight on Channel 12.

At the age of 12, while other kids were out weighing the relative merits of boulders and mibs, Roddy McDowall was making an indelible impression as a sensitive young Welsh lad in the filmed version of "How Green Was My Valley." So indelible in fact that it took years before he could get any other kind of part.

"They actually would write scripts fitting this pre-conceived notion they thought the public had—and maybe the public did have it—of me as an earnest little boy," he explains. "Finally I had to leave the movies to get rid of this notion."

"I came out to New York, just to get away from that same kind of part, and I had to study for two years here before anyone gave me a chance. It was on Kraft Theater that they let me break away, and I've been getting interesting jobs most of the time since then."

Roddy is now 29 and established as a Broadway actor of depth and versatility—he's played comedy in Shaw's "Misalliance," an impossible young artist in Shaw's "The Doctor's Dilemma," a misfit soldier in "No Time for Sergeants," and a demonic young charmer based on the character of Loeb of the celebrated team of Leopold & Loeb in "Compulsion."

"I was exhausted every day during 'Compulsion.' But what a

part—a charming character who's a complete monster underneath. I lost so much weight during performances that I couldn't do anything else.

"I can remember acting in London when I was five years old. My sister and I never could see ourselves as anything but actors. Of course, it's perfectly natural for a child to live in fantasies, which we did. But it's very difficult when you get to the age of 15 or 16, what with all the attention you get, to overcome certain problems. Believe me, I had my troubles."

A photography buff, unmarried Roddy spends most of his spare time clicking away at everything in sight. Other than that, there's either acting, or studying about it.

"When people talk about acting technique, I don't know what they mean. You do what you have to do. Learn all about a character. And about yourself. As an actor, there's still plenty of things for me to do."

The Wichita Beacon, 5 May 1958, p. 4

REBELLION: "Everybody should be allowed to try everything," says Roddy McDowall, one of the theater's liveliest rebels against casting regimentation.

Roddy, who began his career as a child actor and is now one of Broadway's most lauded young stars, spends a lot of his time seeking different roles.

Currently appearing in the taut drama "Compulsion," McDowall over the past several years has played broad comedy in "No Time for Sergeants," ultra-stylized Shaw drama and a fantastic Ariel in "The Tempest."

His principal criterion is

that no two parts ever resemble each other. Most of his most successful parts have come "by fluke," and the ones he was most set on have often worked out less well. This bothers him not at all.

"Every actor should be allowed the luxury of failure," Roddy insists.

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In New York Roddy also began an on again/off again relationship with Montgomery Clift, who he had first met back in Hollywood. This was not a healthy relationship and for a number of years it limped along, burdened by Clift's substance abuse and ambivalence towards Roddy. In many ways, Monty Clift was cruel. He often had Roddy arrange dinner parties but refused to invite Roddy to those parties.¹⁸ He had a number of lovers, both men and women, and thought nothing of parading those relationships in front of Roddy.¹⁹

On 12 May, 1956, Monty was involved in a horrific car accident. His behaviour thereafter worsened, due to ongoing pain, medications and disfigurement. In late 1956 in response to continuing monetary demands from his mother and increasing distress over Monty Clift's deteriorating behaviour Roddy began psychoanalysis with one of New York's top analysts. Although he made no secret of this to his friends, he never told his parents.

Entering psychoanalysis seems to have been the turning point in Roddy's life. He began to draw boundaries to prevent use/abuse by others and he began to prioritise his own interests. He was able eventually to extricate himself from the relationship with Monty Clift and he was able to firmly resist his mother's manipulations. Matters came to a head when Win had spent the last of the savings, at the same time that Roddy was unemployed in New York City. The Cheviot Hills house had to be sold and he was financially free and independent at last.

Meanwhile, Roddy had been developing as a photographer. He'd started using a box Brownie in childhood. In 1953, while doing the hit **Misalliance** at the City Centre, he found he had a lot of free time. Photography became a very expensive hobby, but he eventually developed it as a second career and could have made a living as a celebrity photographer. He became one of the highest-paid photographers around, partly because he was the only photographer celebrities like Laurence Olivier, Charlie Chaplin and Mae West would accept.

¹⁷ The Akron Beacon, 9 February 1958, p. 25

¹⁸ Robert LaGuardia, *Monty*, 1977, p. 139

¹⁹ Patricia Bosworth, *Montgomery Clift: A Biography*, 1978, p. 210

In 1955 aged 27 Roddy played Ariel in **The Tempest** at The American Shakespeare Festival Theatre, Stratford, Connecticut for four months. This was a role where he donned make up to transform into a sprite, the first male actor to do the role in more than 80 years.²⁰ He reported it took him 4 hours to apply the Ariel make up

“and the worst time of it was when we played **Julius Caesar** at the matinee and **The Tempest** in the evening. If I began removing my Caesar makeup as soon as that curtain came down, I was just able to have my Tempest make up on in time for the evening performance. ... By the end of the season I had become so expert in applying the make up that it rarely took me over three hours.”²¹

Roddy’s performance of Ariel is still considered outstanding. The 1960 film of the play is available on YouTube.²² On stage he used green body paint but for the movie it was white.



Ariel in **The Tempest** movie on the left, and Mordred on stage in **Camelot** on the right.

Roddy was now an established theatre actor with a solid professional standing. Along the way he’d played a variety of roles from a Russian con man to a militant peacemaker. In 1960 he phoned the stage director Moss Hart to ask for the role of Mordred in the upcoming Lerner-Loewe musical **Camelot**. The composers even gave him a song solo, "The Seven Deadly Virtues", at the last minute.²³ His circle of friends extended from old Hollywood stars through young Hollywood, to the theatre set. His personal reputation was high.

After 12 months he was bought out of **Camelot** and signed to film **Cleopatra** at \$2,500 per week, it being expected his filming would take just 2 weeks. In the event of the difficulties experienced in filming the movie, it took a full year to shoot his scenes so he ended up earning about \$130,000. His friends were thrilled at this turn of fortune. It seems this was the first time he had earned good money where it was under his control. He was 35.

²⁰ A Tribute to Roddy McDowall, by Mel Schuster <https://www.xmoppet.org/reprints/schuster.htm>

²¹ The Daily Times, *McDowall old hand at 'Tempest'*, 3 February 1960, p. 16

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xspsau84jLk&t=367s>

²³ Obituary <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-rod-dy-mcdowall-1176240.html>

Before **Camelot**, in early 1960 Roddy had begun a serious relationship with a young actor named John Valva and they lived together in Roddy's apartment in the El Dorado in New York. It seems to have been a genuinely loving domestic and mutually supportive relationship where they socialised together *albeit* out of the public eye. At that time, such a relationship was illegal. However it was not a secret in their circle of friends and colleagues.²⁴ Roddy and John travelled with Richard Burton, his wife and two daughters, to Rome to begin filming **Cleopatra** in September 1961. Roddy and John lived with the Burtons at their villa, until the Richard Burton/Elizabeth Taylor affair became public, when they quietly moved out. While Roddy remained friends with Elizabeth and Richard, he also remained friends with Sybil, so he and John visited Sybil and the two children regularly at the Burton chalet in Cellynny. From Europe, Roddy and John travelled to Hampstead in August 1962.

The image shows two handwritten passport forms. The left form is for John Valva, with Family Name 'VALVA', Given Name 'JOHN', Initial 'F. V-410', and Passport Number 'B 587294'. The right form is for Roddy McDowall, with Family Name 'MCDOWALL', Given Name 'RODDY', Initial 'AM-254', and Passport Number 'B 587060'. Both forms indicate they are American citizens, born in New York City, and are traveling on TWA Flight 701. The left form also mentions 'NEW YORK, N.Y. 17' and 'ADMITTED'. Both forms are dated 'SEP 7 - 1962'.

On 7 September 1962, Roddy and John flew back to New York. These tickets were bought separately and they were seated apart. Clearly discretion in public was still a significant factor for the couple; even after 2 years together they were cautious.

Later Sybil and the children moved to New York, first to the El Dorado where Roddy and John lived and then to a house on Staten Island. Roddy and John continued to visit Sybil Burton and the two children, Kate and Jessica, regularly.

Late 1962 and much of 1963 was a difficult 12 months for Roddy. In 1962, his psychoanalyst contributed Roddy's case study notes to a series about treating homosexuals. Roddy had been singing the analyst's praises to his friends and the analyst had been freely talking about him being a patient. While the name, location and income source were changed, anyone with a passing knowledge of Roddy's life story would recognise the patient's distinctive history, so the publication in October 1962 basically outed him as gay.

Then in mid 1963 John Valva told Roddy that he and Sybil Burton were in love and he was leaving Roddy to be with her. The relationship between John and Sybil lasted a short couple of months (July and August), but it was widely reported in the print media:

"Sybil Burton's New York action is named John Valva, Roddy McDowall's chum."

When it became obvious to both John and Sybil that this relationship would not work, John returned to Roddy seeking reconciliation. Roddy declined.

Roddy's interviews show no hint but it must have been a year of turmoil for him.

²⁴ Bast (William) papers: Collection Number:,LSC.2290, Correspondence 1958-1974, UCLA Library

History doesn't record what happened to John Valva. However Sybil and Roddy remained friends until the end of his life. When Sybil needed funds to start her New York City nightclub *Arthur*, Roddy was one of the people she approached and he staked her for a quarter share in that first nightclub. *Arthur* was where mixing records by disc jockeys first started²⁵. When the franchise opened in Hollywood, again Roddy was one of the co-owners.

Sybil and Richard's daughter Kate became an actress and built her own friendship with Roddy. Sybil and Elizabeth Taylor were reconciled at his bedside on his deathbed, and when Elizabeth opened the Roddy McDowall Rose Garden dedication in 2001 at the Motion Picture & Television Fund Retirement Home, Woodland Hills, California, Sybil was there with her.²⁶



Roddy with Sybil at the premiere of Doctor Doolittle in 1967.

Roddy was to be nominated for a best supporting Academy Award in 1964 for his performance as Octavius in *Cleopatra*, but due to an administrative error, 20th Century Fox mistakenly submitted his nomination as leading actor. When the error was discovered the Academy refused to move his nomination to the correct category as the voting slips were already at the printers. Hence, the studio printed an apology in the Hollywood Reporter:

"We feel it is important that the industry realise that your electrifying performance as Octavius in *Cleopatra*, which was unanimously singled out by the critics as one of the best supporting actor performances, is not eligible due to a regrettable error on the part of 20th Century Fox".

In April 1965, while working on *Inside Daisy Clover*, Roddy rented a Malibu beach house for 6 months and made twenty two 8mm movies there of his friends²⁷. Many of Hollywood's greatest stars and other celebrities were filmed, just relaxing at the beach. These were later given to Soap Box Productions, transferred to video, and uploaded to YouTube.

Also, in May 1965 Win McDowall underwent surgery and although initially she seemed to be recovering she died on 17 May. (His father died in July 1978.)

In early 1966 Roddy played a CIA agent in *The Defector*, the last film made by Montgomery Clift, who stated that he could never have finished the film without Roddy's moral support.²⁸

²⁵ Brewster, Bill; Broughton, Frank, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey* (2nd ed.). 2000, New York: Headline Book Publishing. ISBN 978-0-80213-6886.

²⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_y48MGRaIM

²⁷ <https://easilycrestfallen.com/2013/08/08/roddy-mcdowells-home-movies/>

²⁸ Patricia Bosworth, *Montgomery Clift: A Biography*, 1978, p. 410

Then Monty Clift died on 23 July 1966. After the family were notified and the coroner had conducted an autopsy, Roddy was one of the first people outside the family to be informed. Roddy phoned John Springer, publicist to both Monty and Elizabeth Taylor, at about 3am in London. In a trembling voice Roddy told John

“I wanted ... to tell you ... you’ve got to tell Elizabeth and (director) Fred Zinnemann that Monty’s dead.”²⁹

John phoned the Burton Taylors and Richard said he would tell Elizabeth. A few hours later Elizabeth emerged to tell the world how much she loved Monty. In fact, like most of his other friends, she had dropped out of contact with Monty over the previous five years. Despite everything, Roddy had remained Monty’s friend. He was the only member of Monty’s ‘show biz family’ to remain close to him until the day he died.³⁰ Even in the late 1990’s Illeana Douglas could detect a deep love for Monty when Roddy spoke about him.³¹

Also in 1966 Roddy published the first edition of *Double Exposure*, a photo gallery of celebrities with commentary by other celebrities. His portrait photography along with individual celebrity commentaries made it a desirable coffee table book. Three subsequent updates, *Double Exposure Takes Two, Three and Four*, were published over the next 30 years.

Then came the original **Planet of the Apes** (POTA) movie. On a flight back from London, Roddy sat next to Arthur P Jacobs who already had him in mind for the role of Cornelius. Arthur told him about the project and swore him to secrecy. Jacobs knew Roddy was capable of emoting through heavy make up and bringing a wide variety of characters to life, so he was confident that Roddy would be ideal for the role of Cornelius.

Roddy was intrigued and signed on for the movie. It brought him back to the movie-going public in a big way, this time as a serious dramatic actor, and it jump-started his public profile. He returned in the 3rd, 4th and 5th movies in the series but was not involved in the second movie. While the second POTA movie was being filmed Roddy was in Scotland directing **Tam Lin**, a retelling of the legendary Scottish border folk story.

This was a passion project for Roddy and his only directorial effort. He had been friends with Ava Gardner since 1942 and had asked specifically for her to play the role of Michaela Cazaret. Not only did he think Ava was ideally suited to the role but additionally with her involvement, it would be easier to obtain funding. Ian McShane played Tom Lynn, and it was filmed on location in Scotland in mid-1969.

The movie became problematic when the production company suffered serious financial setbacks. Commonwealth United Entertainment was an American film and TV production and distribution company. By 1971, Commonwealth United was \$80 million in debt and went bankrupt. CU was acquired by American International Pictures, and **Tam Lin** was re-edited and released in October 1977 as a horror movie called **The Devil’s Widow**. Roddy was so distressed by the changes that he wanted his name taken off it. In the end the movie was released with his name as Director. Martin Scorsese saw Roddy’s own print of the movie later in private, acquired the rights to it and eventually the year before Roddy passed away it was re-edited again and re-released in a version closer to his original intent.

²⁹ Robert LaGuardia, *Monty*, 1977, p. 286

³⁰ Robert LaGuardia, *Monty*, 1977, pp. 135, 139

³¹ Douglas, I, 2015, *I blame Dennis Hopper : and other stories from a life lived in and out of the movies*, p. 179

Back home in Hollywood

In late 1972, Roddy returned to Hollywood to live permanently. He kept his Central Park apartment filled with stage and movie memorabilia for a number of years afterwards, but Brookdale Road, Studio City, just south of the Briarcliff Manor Residential Historic District, became his home in 1972 and it remained so for the rest of his life. Rupert Everett commented that it was on the unfashionable side of Laurel Canyon as Roddy was

“famously careful with his money”³²

Roddy began hosting Sunday lunches at Brookdale Road, and these became legendary because of the people he hosted. The food was nothing remarkable – Dominick Dunne noted it all arrived at once on a plate, even the bread roll³³ and Rupert Everett remarked the food was nothing beyond that of a school canteen. However the company was an eclectic mix of old Hollywood and new Hollywood. As an example, in 1990 Johnny Depp was photographed by Roddy at one of these lunches and subsequently Johnny Depp based his portrayal of his character Ichabod Crane in the 1999 movie **Sleepy Hollow** in part on Roddy.

In early 1974 Roddy signed on for the **POTA TV series** at a rumoured fee of \$25,000 per episode. It was reported that he scored a coup with this large salary and even though the series only lasted 14 weeks he grossed \$350,000. He expressed disappointment that there was no overarching plan for the series and that it was cancelled so early without giving it time to build a following. He also stated that the character of Galen was his favourite of the three ape characters he had played.

He continued working solidly, taking on all manner of roles in every genre, with a personal focus on horror movies. In 1987 Roddy both produced and co-starred in **Overboard**, starring Kurt Russell and Goldie Hawn. This was his first and only venture back into the role of Producer since the Monogram movies of 1948-1950.

By the late 1980's Roddy had several sources of income. In addition to residuals from earlier movie and TV productions, he was still earning from new movie and TV appearances. He had commenced doing voice-over work and also was recording audiobooks. His photography was still bringing in an income as sales of *Double Exposure* continued.

Roddy was still photographing people into the late 1990's.³⁴ He continued to work on stage (his last appearance in 1998, **A Christmas Carol**, Madison Square Garden alternating nights with Hal Linden), in movies (his last role in **A Bug's Life**, voice 1998) and on TV (**Godzilla, The Series**, voice role, posthumous release 1999), still suffering from what he called the actor's disease:

“I always think I'll never get another job”.³⁵

Roddy in fact was known for never refusing a job and was quoted as saying

“I've never worked as much as I want to.”³⁶

In 1992 he was diagnosed with prostate cancer and made a full recovery. In early 1998 he developed back pain but neither chiropractor nor masseuse was able to treat the pain.

³² Everett, R, *Red Carpets and Other Banana Skins*, 2006, p. 177

³³ Dunne, D, *The company he kept*, Vanity Fair, December 1998.

³⁴ Douglas, I, 2015, *I blame Dennis Hopper : and other stories from a life lived in and out of the movies*, p. 175

³⁵ The Flint Journal, *Roddy McDowall in Big Demand after drought in film roles*, 6 May, 1963, p. 17

³⁶ The Los Angeles Times, *Roddy McDowall Pulls Out All the F-Stops*, 19 Oct, 1989, p. 99

Hospitalisation and extensive testing followed and the diagnosis was of widespread and terminal cancer. He elected to go home to die.

Roddy died on 3 October 1998 at age 70 from lung cancer, probably due to his chain smoking over many years. His body was cremated and his ashes were scattered over the Pacific Ocean on 7 October 1998 off Los Angeles County.

In IMDB he is listed with 271 acting roles (movies, videogames, television - some voice-overs and some uncredited roles) starting in 1938 and going through until posthumously released narrator roles in 2001.

Roddy drove a red convertible in his later years but when he lived in New York City, he rode a Lambretta 150 LD motor scooter. Motor scooters were the preferred mode of transport for theatre workers, plus he found it convenient for going to photographic assignments.



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Roddy on his 1956 Lambretta 150 LD in New York City, with co-star Joan Hovis in 1957.



Roddy's custom 1985 Cadillac Eldorado convertible.

Horse whisperer Monty Roberts was his stunt double in **My Friend Flicka** and **Thunderhead**, according to IMDB. <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm3046227/>

Roddy was Marilyn Monroe's lesson partner in 1946 when they were both attending tap dance classes at 20th Century Fox. An accomplished ballroom dancer, he later won both the Charleston and Cha-Cha contests on the **The Arthur Murray Party** (1950).

Of Marilyn Monroe he later said (Sunday News, 17 November, 1963)

"when she was 17, ... she was so inarticulate she wouldn't talk to anyone."

Roddy was an avid swimmer and both his Cheviot Hills and Studio City homes were equipped with swimming pools. Additionally he loved swimming in the ocean.

In 1961 while working together on **Cleopatra**, Elizabeth Taylor gave him a signet ring with the McDowall family crest. Roddy wore it religiously for the rest of his life, even when working. He bequeathed it to his sister but its location now is unknown.



With Marilyn Monroe, Chicago, July 1949.

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Susan Cunningham
PO Box 2
Rockhampton Q 4701

Roddy supported a number of charities, chief among them being the Motion Picture & Television Fund (MPTF), which maintains the Motion Picture & Television Country Home and Hospital in Woodland Hills, CA.

The MPTF is a charitable organization that offers assistance and care to those in the motion picture and television industries and their families with limited or no resources, including services such as temporary financial assistance, case management, and residential living.

His sister Virginia (pictured) lived there until she passed away in 2006.



On 27 August 1998, the "Planet of the Apes" 30th Anniversary Screening took place at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences in Beverly Hills, California.

This was just 6 weeks before Roddy passed away but the photos taken that day belie the truth of his health.

Right, 27 August 1998, with **Planet of the Apes** co-star Kim Hunter.



Some personal observations in conclusion.

I have never read anything about Roddy McDowall that has detracted from his image in my eyes. Everything I've learnt just adds to his lustre.

He clearly had a lot of self-awareness and social intelligence because he was able to observe people's behaviours, interpret his observations and then change his behaviour to affect better outcomes. Psychoanalysis seems to have turbo-charged this capacity.

He must have been very intelligent, because of how much he learned under his own steam. He was not spoon-fed and he didn't have family support getting an education. In contrast, he had to overcome obstacles placed in the way of his education by his family.

He seems in many ways to have adopted one of my favourite sayings

"When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." 07 4926 5467 | researchandreports.com.au | ABN 28 481 869 679

Instead of resenting and fighting the circumstances he was given, and potentially ending up with substance addictions, he seized every opportunity and turned it to his own advantage.

He also behaved ethically in a situation when many others would not. He did not try to embarrass or hurt his parents, though he did seek help in severing ties with them. He did not hide his sexuality by entering a lavender marriage. It would have made his life easier in many ways but it was not the path he chose to take. According to the case notes, when he entered analysis he stated he did not want to be 'cured' of his attraction to men.

I'm especially awed by Roddy's ability to survive sustained financial abuse and coercive control by his mother, sustained mental / emotional abuse by Monty Clift and the twin public betrayals by his analyst and his partner in 1962-3, and yet still remain the kind, trustworthy and generous person so many people loved and respected.



ADDENDUM

You will note that I have not used Darwin Porter's celebrity biographies as source material re: Roddy McDowall. This is because I consider Darwin Porter to be wholly unreliable.

First, Porter claims that Roddy (died in 1998) was his long-time friend and supplied him with details about Merv Griffin's relationships and brief encounters³⁷. Merv Griffin died in 2007, so if Roddy was providing Porter with information it must have been while Griffin was alive.

Roddy was well-known all his life to be scrupulously reliable about keeping people's confidences. There's no evidence he ever betrayed a confidence, and he left his diaries to be held under a 100 year non-release period. Why would Roddy make a singular exception by betraying Merv Griffin's secrets to Darwin Porter?

Porter states that Roddy called Merv "my dear" all his life³⁸, as if that meant Merv was Someone Special to Roddy. In fact Roddy called lots of people "my dear" as has been reported by everyone from Rupert Everett to Illeana Douglas. This is an odd mistake from someone who claims Roddy was his long-time friend. I conclude Porter barely knew Roddy, which again raises the question Why would Roddy betray confidences to him?

Also, the concept that Roddy would be phoning Merv Griffin every morning for years to relay gossip³⁹ is unbelievable. If he'd been doing that, no-one would have trusted him at all.

Tavo Amador of The Bay Area Reporter, an LGBTQ community newspaper noted (2009)

"McDowell, whose "conversations" appear frequently, was highly regarded for his vast knowledge of Hollywood secrets and legendary discretion. Porter makes him sound like Perez Hilton."⁴⁰

Second, Darwin Porter claims much of his knowledge came from the journals and diaries of Stanley Haggart (died 1980) and his mother Maria (died 1960), who had arrived in Hollywood in 1910 when there were less than 4,000 people in the town. Allegedly Maria began keeping journals and instilled the habit in her son. They lived next door to Hollywood columnist Adela Rogers St. Johns. Allegedly they recorded everything they heard or saw, and Adela filled in the gaps.⁴¹ If true, this *might* explain how Porter is able to report whole conversations word for word from many decades ago. Certainly no-one's conversational memory is that reliable.⁴² Not explained is how they heard conversations out of their earshot.

In fact, Stanley Haggart's nephew Peter claims he tried to correspond with Porter over the years about the journals that were apparently the basis for many of his books, but Porter would never respond. Peter Haggart doubts his fervent Episcopalian grandmother Maria Jane Haggart kept any journals and suspects that is why Darwin Porter would not respond.⁴³

Under these circumstances I can't give credence to anything Darwin Porter writes, so I have excluded all his works as reference sources.

Susan Cunningham, 2024

³⁷ Darwin Porter, *Merv Griffin: A life in the closet*, 2009, pp. 519 and 521

³⁸ Darwin Porter, *Merv Griffin: A life in the closet*, 2009, p. 59

³⁹ Darwin Porter, *Merv Griffin: A life in the closet*, 2009, p. 204

⁴⁰ https://www.ebar.com/story.php?ch=arts__culture&sc=books&id=222931

⁴¹ <https://filmstarfacts.com/2017/09/28/darwin-porter-can-believe-writes/>

⁴² <https://academic.oup.com/hcr/article-abstract/14/2/203/4587713>

⁴³ <https://filmstarfacts.com/2017/09/28/darwin-porter-can-believe-writes/>



Ronald Robert Harper played Colonel Alan Virdon, astronaut and mission leader. He was born in Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania on 12 January 1933, the second son of George and Mabel Harper, whose families had been in the state for several generations. He had an older brother George and a younger sister Marion.

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	<p style="text-align: center;">RONALD HARPER</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Ronnie”</i></p> <p>Football, Intramural Sports, Debate, Chorus, Assembly Soloist, Minstrel, Minstrel end man, Sophomore Play, Junior Play, Senior Play, Assembly Play, Annual Board, Section Booster, News Staff, Rifle Team, Junior Activities Committee, Soccer, Pericles.</p> <p>Ambition: Lawyer.</p> <p>Enjoys: Camping.</p> <p>Pet Peeve: None (always happy).</p> <p><i>With so many activities how did Ronnie ever make such good marks?</i></p>
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Ron graduated Turtle Creek High School in 1950 and based on the straight A's in high school, he won a full scholarship to Princeton University, New Jersey. At Princeton he was in the wrestling and boxing teams, and for two years in the drama group. He graduated **Summa cum laude** and ultimately took a degree in international politics, his thesis being **"The efficacy of art as an instrument of propaganda"**.⁴⁴

Ron also told the story several times that his scholarship required him to earn \$400 over Summer but when he was offered a place in the Summer theatre there was no payment. He approached the Dean of Admissions, who told him 'Ron the purpose of a college education is simply to help you find how to most enjoy the rest of your life' and so Ron was given permission to act in the Summer theatre while the University figured out how to subsidise him for \$400. ⁴⁵ In some tellings he sounds emotional about the Dean's kindness.

Based on his Princeton results he won a fellowship to Harvard Law but eventually turned it down to pursue acting as a career.⁴⁶ Famously, this was due to Albert Einstein's advice.

Sunday, Aug. 14, 1966

Most Valuable Advice

By RON HARPER

I was a student of politics at Princeton when Einstein taught there and I was also active in the University Theatre. Dr. Einstein loved Shakespeare and came to see our performances regularly. He used to come back stage and chat with us.

During a chat one day I laughingly asked him if he thought I could earn my living as an actor and if my performance that day was good. He was very easy to talk to and enjoyed the company of young people.

A smile crossed his face and his eyes twinkled. He then asked me if I had felt good while doing it.

"Then that's what counts," the professor said. "Never worry if you were good or bad—just if what you were doing seemed the right thing for you to do. If you're satisfied and happy you will soon find out that the good will more than outweigh the bad."

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Cunningham
PO Box 24
Waco, TX 76799
481 869 679

⁴⁴ This Week in TV Guide, 25 November 1967.

⁴⁵ Marcia Arroyo Ron Harper interview, Pasadena Public Access TV Channel, February 2011:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7KIJgosP4U>

⁴⁶ Waco Tribune, 19 November 1967, p. 52

Ron's high school and college sweetheart was Lois. They were together for eight years⁴⁷ and it was during this time that he began painting in oils. One of his earliest paintings was a view from her apartment in Waverly Place, Greenwich Village looking down to Sixth Avenue. He continued to paint for many years and his paintings were exhibited in galleries.

"I was in New York," he recalls, "waiting for somebody to cast me in something - a Broadway play, an off-Broadway play, a TV series, anything. Wondering when the phone would ring, I spent a lot of time in my living quarters looking for the four walls. "That's when I decided those walls were bleak at best and needed - well, something. I couldn't afford to buy any paintings, so I decided to do my own. I just bought the materials and went to work."

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Any thoughts of his turning professional and selling his paintings?
 "I could never make a living at it," he says. "For one thing, I'm too slow. For another, I get too much enjoyment out of looking at my paintings after I hang them."

Chronicle Tribune
 Sun, Mar 28, 1971 ·Page 55

HAS PAINTINGS
 Ron Harper of "Where the Heart Is" on the CBS Television Network has his oil paintings displayed in several California galleries.

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Ron was conscripted into the Navy 1956-1957 where he met John Aniston (later Jennifer's father), starting a lifelong friendship. He was stationed in Panama City where he was Program Manager and Producer for two years of the US Navy's radio and television station in Panama⁴⁹, adding to his skill set.

In Panama his girlfriend was a Chilean/Irish girl, an ethnic mix which he described as "a wild combination".⁵⁰

Demobbed, in May 1958 Ron performed at the Allenberry Playhouse, Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania in three productions: **The Happiest Millionaire**, **Holiday For Lovers**, and Noel Coward's **Fallen Angels**.

Ron was Paul Newman's understudy in the Broadway production of **Sweet Bird of Youth** in 1959, and sought Paul's advice when the bright lights of Hollywood beckoned.

⁴⁷ San Bernardino County Sun, 4 September 1966, p. 16

⁴⁸ The Daily Advance, 19 February 1977, p. 30

⁴⁹ Los Angeles Evening Citizen News, 27 June 1963, p. 19

⁵⁰ San Bernardino County Sun, 4 September 1966, p. 16

'Sunday' Starrer Indebted to Navy

Thanks to two years with the Navy Ron Harper, recently costarred with Marlo Thomas in Norman Krasna's sophisticated Broadway comedy hit "Sunday In New York" at the Civic Playhouse, is experienced in a field other than acting, namely radio and television station management.

Harper, who originally intended to pursue a career in the diplomatic service and won a degree in international politics at Princeton with that aim, was made program manager for the Navy's radio and television station in Panama during his service stint.

He proved himself so well that he has been offered two similar posts with commercial stations in this country since his discharge.

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Ron Harper gives an impressive performance as the young artist with whom Miss Gabrielson becomes enamored. Reginald Rowland, Jr. and Joyce Madrick complete the cast.

The Patriot-News
Tue, May 27, 1958 ·Page 20

Laurels To Harper

The real comic laurels, however, go to Ron Harper who, as the young suitor badgered very nearly out of his mind by this middle-aged adolescent, shows considerable talent for the controlled exaggeration of farce and caricature. He is also a conscious, well-endowed stylist, raising the specter of another budding Brando.

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He's stage-trained and still loves the theater. Actually, early in his career he had a chance to come to Hollywood but chose to stay with "Sweet Bird of Youth," where he understudied Paul Newman.

"I WANTED A chance to play the Newman role, Chance Wayne," he says, "and I passed up a seven-year contract. At the time, I was making \$125 a week, more money than I had ever made acting. The offer was for \$400 a week.

"I can remember talking with Paul Newman, when I was trying to make my decision. He said the offer wouldn't really help me and maybe it would hurt me. Also, he said, if I was really good, it would happen for me."

Ron told his agent of his decision. The movie company doubled the money and lessened the term of the contract. Ron went back to Newman and told him of this. Paul's reply was a very sensible "What's changed?"

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⁵¹ Van Nuys News and Valley Green Sheet, 19 Sep 1963, p. 110

⁵² York Daily Record, 6 May 1958, p. 27

"Quite an actor, Paul Newman," said Harper. "In the third act he has a line that goes, 'Maybe some saints are heroes but not Chance Wayne.' And every time he'd say that line the tears would roll into his eyes like clockwork. Every performance, right on the same word the tears would come. That's my idea of a pro."

"I kept saying to myself, 'Should you waste your good education being an actor?'" Harper said. "And that little voice within me kept saying things like, 'what do you want to take that fellowship to Harvard law for? Be an actor, Starving is fun.' And like the fool that any actor has to be, I listened to that dumb little voice."

Stockton Evening and Sunday Record, 5 July 1966, p. 30

Television series 1960's

Hollywood Tattler, Volume 1, No. 2, Feb 1962

Ron Harper No bird-brained athlete this guy. Along with a college degree from Princeton University and such accomplished hobbies as oil painting and playing classical music on the piano, Ron's a terrific swimmer, tennis player, and boxer. He developed his interest in acting while at college; from there he went straight to Broadway for a starring role in "Night Circus" where he was discovered by a talent scout for the movies. He now co-stars in NBC-TV's *87th Precinct*.



Ron starred in all 30 episodes of **87th Precinct** as Detective Bert Kling (1961 – 62). This was a widely liked series (1 season) which foreshadowed the looming social changes and Ron's acting was referred to thus

"a few of the less seasoned guest stars should have joined Ron Harper in Lee Strasberg's acting class."⁵⁴

The guest stars included Peter Falk, Dennis Hopper, Leonard Nimoy, Robert Culp, Gena Rowlands, Nancy Davis (Reagan), John (Gomez) Astin and Nancy Kulp. Also note that in the DVD extra, Ron reports that **87th Precinct** had sturdy ratings and ended because its producer, Hubbell Robinson, went to another network and NBC's executives didn't think the program could continue without him. Ron said he thought **87th Precinct** had years of life left in it.⁵⁵

⁵³ Dayton Daily News, 24 August 1974, p. 27

⁵⁴ <https://medium.com/the-awl/best-forgotten-87th-precinct-1961-1962-ad119733eb27>

⁵⁵ <https://medium.com/the-awl/best-forgotten-87th-precinct-1961-1962-ad119733eb27>

In the single season of **Wendy and Me** (1964 – 65) Ron played Jeff Conway, husband of the titular Wendy. **Wendy and Me** ran to 34 episodes and would not see daylight today. Jeff was the smart, terribly patient husband of the ditz blonde Wendy. About its demise Ron said

“We were a half-hour sitcom and the stories were about the domestic life of the characters played by Connie (Stevens) and me. George (Burns) introduced the stories and provided commentary between the scenes. His routine would take up about five minutes of the show, but it kept growing longer and longer as the season progressed. In a half-hour sitcom, you need 18-20 minutes of story and George was writing about ten minutes of funny dialogue for his own scenes. He was a producer, so I remember talking with the associate producers about George using up too much of the time--we were down to twelve minutes to tell our 20-minute story.”

<https://www.classicfilmtvcafe.com/2015/07/ron-harper-actor-interview.html>

<p>Far from “Kookie” Byrnes, to whom the Sunset Strip was a playground, Ron doesn’t even like Hollywood.</p> <p>“It’s a desert of stimulation,” he says thinking back to the “electrifying” atmosphere of New York and Princeton.</p> <p>“There are more unaware people in this town than in any other its size in the country.”</p> <p>Harper confesses to visiting most of the celebrated nite spots along the Strip “once” to see what was happening.</p> <p>“All the myths I heard about Hollywood are true,” he says. “There are a lot of misguided people out here.”</p>	<p>He began his own training at Princeton, spending two seasons in summer stock with the University Players, then studied briefly with Lee Strasberg. In time, he turned up on Broadway.</p> <p>This background makes him impatient with the young actor or actress waiting in Hollywood to be “discovered.”</p> <p>“What are they doing here,” he asks. “Why don’t they go East and study?”</p> <p>Art Form</p> <p>Ron feels the theater is an art form that actors should prepare for their profession like doctors, lawyers, concert pianists and opera singers.</p>	<p>Progress-Bulletin Thu, Jul 30, 1964 · Page 39</p> <p>But the comedy performers are deadly serious. Harper, for example, is a brilliant Princeton graduate who is given to such flights of self-analysis as:</p> <p>“I am a fervent believer in studying acting. Of all the creative arts, only acting is without mechanical aids. Every other creative artist uses some kind of tool—the painter’s brush, the writer’s pen, the composer’s piano—to help him build an emotion.</p> <p>“Only an actor must do it alone, without mechanical aids. And the idea that this can be done without study is preposterous.”</p> <p>See? A barrel of laughs.</p>
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Ron then appeared in all 12 episodes of **The Jean Arthur Show**, playing her character’s son Paul Marshall in 1966. While the series was cancelled after only 12 episodes, we were treated to insights into Ron’s character from his interactions with the co-star he called ‘mom’. (Redlands Daily Facts, 22 September 1966, p. 14)

Ron told this story:

“One day during filming, it was raining and we had to go to the producers office from the set and I didn’t have my raincoat. When I told her I forgot it she threatened me ‘I’m going to write your mother – you could get pneumonia.’ And then said she was

⁵⁶ The Van Nuys News and Valley Green Sheet, 9 March 1962, p. 30

afraid she'd ruined her shoes. So I carried her. She said 'You're very strong. I thought you were the intellectual type, not the physical type.' I used to box, I reminded her. 'Promise me you'll give up fighting. Promise me you'll never box again.' But I haven't boxed for 10 years, I explained. 'Well promise me anyway', she insisted. And all this time I was holding her."⁵⁷ ⁵⁸ ⁵⁹ (He promised).

Ron gets on very well with Miss Arthur, or "Mom" as he calls her. "I like to call people what they ask to be called. I'm also polite. She has never asked to be called Miss Arthur, but I just can't call her Jean."

Muncie Evening Press, 24 September 1966, p. 17

"Let me say first of all that she's a charming lady, innocent and guileless, who apparently harbors a deep shyness. The first day on the set she was concerned about a nick on my face, from shaving. She asked me, 'Did you cut yourself shaving?' and when I explained that I had she was concerned about whether I had used the proper antiseptic pencil to stop the bleeding.

The Jean Arthur show was a disaster area from the outset.

"We spent \$100,000 on scripts and we spend a half-hour defending an iguana or a chicken. It was a chil-

dren's animal show," said Harper.

HE SAID the producers and CBS expected too much from Jean Arthur's return to films. "It was like asking Paderewski to come back and play like he used to in the thirties.

"She had some bad advisers," Harper continued. "She was terribly conscious of her former reputation of being unpredictable. I was unaware of it. She never opened her mouth. Consequently, at crisis points, no one assumed responsibility for the show.

⁵⁷ The Boston Globe, 16 April 1967, p. 380.

⁵⁸ The North Adams Transcript, 16 July 1966, p. 14

⁵⁹ Detroit Free Press, 1 June 1966, p. 12

⁶⁰ Muncie Evening Press, 24 September 1966, p. 17

⁶¹ Quad City Times, 13 July 1966, p. 38

⁶² Corpus Christi Times, 28 May 1967, p. 91

Also in 1966 Ron took the opportunity to speak about celebrities standing for public office.

His background could easily make him a candidate for Hollywood's political brigade, but he insists he'd never consider a political career without first becoming a statesman.

Not Statesman

"This," said the actor, "would be a fulltime undertaking. At best," he went on, "the people entering politics today from the movie ranks are diletantes. For instance it's nice Reagan is running, but he's no statesman."

Deplores Trend

If the trend continues, Harper sadly envisions the day when a Danny Thomas, say, or a Bob Hope could be elected to the office of President of the United States strictly on the basis of their national TV popularity. Hope's constant ridiculing of Hollywood's politicians, Harper considers healthy.

"What I wish now," he concluded, "is that all of TV and film's would-be candidates would turn their backs on politics for the sake of their country."

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In 1967 Ron headlined the TV series **Garrison's Gorillas** (1967-68) with co-stars Cesare Danova, Brendan Boone, Christopher Cary and Rudi Solari. Ron paid \$1500 for a 48 x 14 foot illuminated billboard on Sunset Boulevard which read RON HARPER IS GARRISON.



In the process he alienated Cesare Danova, an established Italian movie star who had been imported to the USA a few years earlier by MGM with a view to playing the lead in Ben Hur.

Cesare was not happy that Ron was hogging the spotlight for himself and words were exchanged. The other co-stars then joined the fracas, while the studio encouraged the press reports of the fuss over the billboard as free publicity.⁶⁴

Garrison's Gorillas was Ron's personal favourite TV series.

"The scripts were quite good and the ratings were very good," reports the actor. "The reason the show was cancelled was because it was perceived as being too violent. There were a group of senators

in the US Congress who were raising a stink. We were surprised when they took us off. Unfortunately there was this pocketful of people who said the show was too violent and that it had to go."

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⁶³ Daily News, 8 June 1966, p. 110

⁶⁴ Dwight Whitney, *A Three Time Loser Tries Again*, TV Guide, 25 November 1967

⁶⁵ TV Zone Special #17 ("Lost Voyagers Special"), June 1995, interview conducted by Marc Shapiro

Looking for love 1960's

In early 1962 Ron began dating Marlo Thomas.

At first the young couple were happy to speak about their love publicly. In May 1963, the newspapers were all reporting that Ron and Marlo were altar-bound and this line continued into November 1963.

Yet in the fall of 1963, after the 6 month run with Marlo (March to September) in a production of **Sunday in New York** in Los Angeles, Ron went alone to Europe for four months, driving around England, Scotland, France, Spain, Italy, Germany and Denmark.⁶⁶

However, he was in the USA in November to escort Marlo to her sister's 21st birthday party.

Quad-City Times
Sat, Jan 05, 1963 · Page 14

Danny Thomas, who managed to scrape together \$7.50 for his wife's birthday present 20 years ago, spent the same amount on the wrappings alone last week, the gift itself being a floor-dragging champagne-mink coat. . . Which prompted Ron Harper to hand-paint a copy of the Mona Lisa, re-title it "Marlissima," and give it to Marlo Thomas.

* * *



Photo of "Marlissima" courtesy of Ron's daughter Nicole.



⁶⁶ Waco Tribune, 19 November 1967, p. 52

Another 'Team' May Be In The Works; It's Up To You, Public

By DAVE HOLLAND
Valley Times TODAY
Entertainment Editor

If Marlo Thomas and Ron Harper come across the footlights as strong as they do over cocktails, they're odds-on favorites to be accepted as a new "team," one that Hollywood—and the public—will beseech for "More."

The talents of this lively and likable young couple will be show-cased locally starting Monday night when they open in Norman Krasna's hit comedy, "Sunday In New York," at the Civic Playhouse on La Cienega.

NOW, whether they click or not, whether they're destined to follow in the footsteps of such teams as Tracy and Hepburn or the Lunts, or even Nelson Eddy and Jeannette MacDonald, will depend entirely on you, dear reader.

You have the responsibility; they have the dream.

"I've never been in a play longer than two weeks," the vivacious actress of summer stock and TV said, "and I'm anxious—yes, excited—about 'Sunday.' It's such a great chance for us to show what we can do."

VERY MUCH in love, Harper and Miss Thomas have been dating for a year now and are, in fact, just a phone call to the papers this side of being engaged.



MARLO Thomas and Ron Harper: He's not short, he's sitting down.

Does their personal relationship make it harder or easier to work together?

"Much, much easier," they both agree.

Harper, a Broadway and

TV ("87th Precinct") trained actor who worked "Under The Yum-Yum Tree" with Marlo in Laguna Beach, said "We know each other's quirks and foibles and likes and dislikes; therefore, we're naturally able to play together better. That's PROFESSIONAL playing," he grinned.

"WE DO more 'home work' with each other than we do with others, too," Miss Thomas said. "We work together a great deal after hours."

"It saves stage time," Harper said. "We can try out 18 wild ideas at home and maybe bring back three to show the director. That way, we don't waste the other cast members' time with stuff that won't be used."

Do they ever let off-stage arguments influence their on-stage characterizations where they have an opportunity to "knife" the other for something done in private life?

"NEVER," Harper said. "In the first place, we've gone together long enough to know that petty differences blow over and don't mean as much as you might think they do and secondly, we have too much respect for each other to inflict harm in something that means so much to us."

But they DO have their differences.

"When neither of us is working," Miss Thomas said, "it can get pretty bad. Nerves on edge and all that."

"Then if only one of us is working," Harper said, "it's fun. We share the other's experiences. He said WHAT to you? And what did you say?"

"Then when we're both working, and working TOGETHER, it's bliss," Miss Thomas said, reaching for Ron's hand across the table. "Then we are working toward a common goal."

AND THAT goal, of course, is being a cinematic team, parlaying "Sunday In New York" into the professional teamwork they enjoy off stage.

"You know what I would LOVE to do?" Miss Thomas asked. "Dig up all those marvelous Myrna Loy-William Powell things and GO!"

Will they make it? They can't without the support of the public. So with this in mind, Harper and Miss Thomas will be breaking their emotional backs for you come Monday and "Sunday."

Valley Times,
21 March
1963, p. 27

The following year (1964) Marlo decreed she would speak no further about her love life in public. Ron however remained ardent, and Marlo's father continued to talk to the press about it.

In January 1965, Marlo publicly stated she and Ron were not engaged, and then she proclaimed them to be "friends but that's all" in March 1965.

In April 1965 with various newspapers reporting his romance with Marlo was cold, Ron left to spend two months with his sister and brother-in-law in Spain.^{67 68}

⁶⁷ Valley Times, 14 April, 1965, p. 35

⁶⁸ Vidette-Messenger of Porter County, 27 Mar, 1965, p. 4

ANOTHER THING she's learned is never to publicize her private life. For instance, Ron Harper has been her steady escort for two years. Gossip has it that they're planning to get married, and though Papa Danny likes Ron very much, he disapproves of his daughter marrying an actor. We'll never know because Marlo told me she wouldn't even begin to discuss her love life.

The Buffalo News
Sat, May 16, 1964 · Page 41

"Our long - time engagement is off, I gather," Ron continued, "but I'd like to pursue it again, definitely. I have a house and a dog now, so maybe I should hold auditions for wife material."

According to Harper, the engagement was never formal.

"We just talked about marriage," he explains, "but it was in the minds of both of us that if we held up under each other's character for a while we'd marry."

MARLO THOMAS and RON HARPER: WHAT ARE THEY WAITING FOR?

That's what Danny Thomas wants to know. After all, Ron's been dating his daughter for over two years!

■ Ron Harper had his decision made for him on *Steady as She Goes* — he was already wed to Connie Stevens when the series began!

In real life, though, he's been steadily dating Marlo Thomas for a good two years and so far, no ring. Recently, at a cocktail party, famed comedian Danny Thomas introduced his daughter Marlo as his wife. "Oh, daddy," she said, he cracked back, "Well, it's time you were someone's wife!" He was teasing her about him, of course, and partly kidding, cause he knows Marlo and Ron are in love and will soon announce their engagement. But Danny was a little nervous, too. What father wouldn't like to see

his daughter walk down the aisle to marry the man she loves? ■
Write Ron & Marlo: ABC-TV, Prospect at Telemeter, Hollywood, California.



CRICKHOLME
Research & Reports

Susan Cunningham
PO Box 24
Rockhampton Q 4700

07 4926 5467 | researchandreports.com.au | ABN 28 481 869 679

← Twelve months later Ron was still holding out hope for a reunion with Marlo. In September 1966 he admitted the engagement to Marlo had not been formal but he did report he was "deeply depressed" by their break up and had gone on holidays to Europe to deal with it.

He then dated a Danish woman he'd met while he was overseas, who had moved to Hollywood.

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⁶⁹ San Bernardino County Sun, 4 September 1966, p. 16

In mid 1966 Ron bought a 3 bedroom house in Tarzana and settled there with his German Shepherd Ralph. He displayed his home making skills such as cooking and shared his famous Chili Con Carne De Luxe recipe with readers. He clearly felt impelled to settle down and marry, shown by the house purchase and repeated comments about 'auditioning for a wife'.

His Cooking a Happy Surprise

BY FREIDA ZYLSTRA

HOLLYWOOD — Ron Harper doesn't need a helper when he decides to entertain dinner guests at home. "If I can't cook it myself, I don't serve it," he said. "Charcoal broiled foods at the barbecue are a life saver, and I'm a bit of an expert at chili."

Ron's formula for a pleasant evening at home is good food, lively conversation, and an exciting game of bridge or Tripoli. His formula for success as an actor apparently is talent and versatility because he displays both in everything from drama to comedy.

Ron's Broadway shows include roles in "Palm Tree in a Rose Garden," "Night Circus," and "Sweet Bird of Youth." He played in the TV series, 87th Precinct, in Wendy and Me, and he's made guest appearances in Bonanza, Thriller, and Wagon Train. He will co-star in the new Jean Arthur Show for CBS-TV as Jean Arthur's son, the lawyer. [The show will be seen in Chicago on channel 2 starting Monday, Sept. 12, at 9 p. m.]

• • •

Ron was born in Turtle Creek, Pa. He attended Princeton university and gained dramatic training with the University Players. He also studied acting with Lee Strasberg in New York and made a few guest appearances on New York television stations. His acting career was interrupted for a tour of duty with the navy.

Now that many of his assignments originate in Hollywood he has decided to set up bachelor quarters and recently bought a large Penn-



CHILI CON CARNE DE LUXE

[Six servings]

- 1½ pounds lean ground beef
- ½ pound bacon, chopped
- ¾ cup celery, sliced
- 1 large green pepper, chopped
- ½ cup chopped onions
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1 can [1 pound, 12 ounces] tomatoes
- 1 can [8 ounces] tomato sauce
- 1 can [6 ounces] tomato paste
- 1 can [1 pound, 14 ounces] chili beans
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon each: oregano, thyme

Brown ground beef in heavy cast iron pan, crumbling well. Fry bacon until crisp; drain. Saute celery, green pepper, and onions in oil until tender. Combine beef, bacon, sauteed vegetables, tomatoes, tomato sauce, and paste. Add chili beans and seasonings to taste. Simmer until meat is tender, adding water if necessary.

Actor Ron Harper manages the kitchen detail quite expertly in his home in Tarzana, Cal. He surprises guests with hors d'oeuvres and chili; and also cooks many of his daily meals. [TRIBUNE Staff Photo by Louis Wolf]

sylvania-style rustic house in Tarzana in the San Fernando valley.

• • •

When Ron entertains six or eight guests for dinner he usually surprises them with hors d'oeuvres that he makes himself. "I top little toasted squares of bread with a thin slice of cheddar cheese, a rolled anchovy fillet and a dash of oregano," he said. "I put them under the broiler just long enough to melt and lightly toast the cheese. Guests never believe I made them with my own big hands."

Ron had a house warming party recently and cooked chili for the crowd. He makes the chili from a recipe that was originally his mother's, but it has been added to since, he explained. He serves it with side dishes of sour cream, cottage cheese, and chopped fresh onions. His recipe follows:

CHILI CON CARNE DE LUXE

[Six servings]

- 1½ pounds lean ground beef
- ½ pound bacon, chopped
- ¾ cup celery, sliced
- 1 large green pepper, chopped
- ½ cup chopped onions
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1 can [1 pound, 12 ounces] tomatoes

The Chili Con Carne De Luxe recipe was based on his mother's original recipe, with his own additions.

As with Roddy McDowall it was the Harper family's mother, Mabel, who had been the dominating force. Unlike Win McDowall, Mabel Harper, encouraged her three children to study and 'Get out of town!' Ron's straight A's gave him that opportunity and Mabel encouraged him to go to college and get into law. Turtle Creek was just a dot on the map and he heeded his mother's advice to get out.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Chicago Tribune, 26 August 1966, p. 36

⁷¹ Dwight Whitney, *A Three Time Loser Tries Again*, TV Guide, 25 November 1967.

In 1967 he was actually 34 years old.

The Gazette
Thu, Sep 01, 1966 ·Page 22

Chantuse Lesley Gore and
Ron Harper of the Jean Arthur
show are crooning to each
other.

At 30, Ron is still a bachelor but since he recently bought himself a home in Tarzana, Cal., with a small orange grove, he says he thinks it's time he starts seriously looking around for a wife to go with his house.

"I'm holding auditions in August," he said.

WHAT HE'D like is a girl who plays tennis, is interested in hunting antiques—traditional, whatever that is—and can cook.

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Ron is sunny and pleasant in an interview. He talks freely about himself and his aspirations. Also his romances.

It appears he has been something of a loser in the matrimonial sweepstakes, as well. He dated Connie Stevens (they were husband and wife in "Wendy and Me") but she married another, got divorced, and is now about to become Mrs. Eddie Fisher.

For three years he was engaged to Marlo Thomas. Now reports say she will soon marry Len Goldberg, program boss of ABC.

That breakup really jolted Ron. He has a hard time explaining it, except that it's so hard for people in the acting business to make long-term plans. Or even a date for the next day.

April, 1967

His explanation for the failure of "Wendy and Me" is that viewers resented George Burns' intrusions.

"We had an hour of material to work with in every show. And 23 minutes is short enough as it is, but when you cut it to 12 to get in Burns' comments, it became ridiculous. You couldn't tell a decent story."

When Marlo left him and the Arthur show folded, Ron said, "I think I'll go into the auditioning business. I have a nice home and a dog. I'll audition for a wife and I'll audition for a show."

The show has come along. The wife may take a little longer.

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⁷² Cincinnati Post, 17 May 1967, p. 8

⁷³ *Story of Ron Harper: How to Succeed by Failing*, The Boston Globe, 16 April 1967, p. 380

Mid 1967 during **Garrison's Gorillas** he was reported to be wooing Cheryl Miller who was then playing Paula in the TV series **Daktari**.⁷⁴

However by September 1967 he was dating Jo Ann Pflug⁷⁵ and in January and February 1968 various newspapers were printing one-liners that they were going to get married. They were still together in September 1968.⁷⁶

Fabulous 208 magazine did a two page/8 photo story on the couple, declaring they might be married by the time the magazine was published, while noting Ron was aiming to switch to making movies.



RON HARPER and Joanne Pflug check their seating reservations at the Coconut Grove for the opening night festivities of recording artists The Four Tops.

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At home with Jo Ann Pflug and Ralph the German Shepherd.



Undated Feb 208

⁷⁴ Teen World, August 1967, p. 15

⁷⁵ Sunday News, 10 September 1967, p. 56

⁷⁶ Intelligencer Journal, 26 September 1968, p. 42

⁷⁷ Sunday News, 10 September 1967, p. 56

By January 1969 Ron was in Mexico filming the movie **The Savage Season** playing a cynical south-of-the-border adventurer involved with a pretty metallurgist and stolen platinum.⁷⁸ He was also flying back to New York City some weekends to romance Sally Stark who was appearing off-Broadway in a production called **Dames at Sea**. At least one newspaper reported they had “that altar-look” at that time.



In 1972 Ron appeared with Beth Brickell in an episode of **Love American Style, Love and the Ski Lodge**, which is available to view on YouTube.



In 1975 along with the only photo I can find of them together, a brief comment about their wedding reported that Ron and Sally had “dated on and off in the past but made a pretty quick decision.”

He was 41 and she was 36 when they married.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ <https://www.classicfilmtvcafe.com/2015/07/savage-season-film-review.html>

⁷⁹ *How the year went*, TV Day Stars Annual 1975

Ron told the story of their wedding and **Planet of the Apes TV** several times. This telling is from 2008:

"I was then about to get married, for the first time, to my sweetheart, Sally Stark, who I'd been crazy about for a couple of years. I'd proposed to her a couple of times and she said "Are you kidding? Get outta here!", then she asked me a couple of times and I said "Hey, what is this? I do the asking!" Finally we came to an agreement and decided we were going to get married in June 1974.

Fox wanted me to fly out and test on a Friday. The wedding, which had already been planned for three months, was going to take place in a little church in Riverhead, New York, where she grew up, the following day, Saturday! I knew I could just barely do it - I would of course miss the wedding rehearsal dinner, but that didn't bother me. But I emphasized to the producers, through my agent, that I had to be finished on Friday because I was getting married early Saturday morning. With trepidation, I kissed Sally goodbye and I got on the plane and I went out and I did the test.

I did the test and I got out of there in time to get on a plane at six o'clock at night. The plane took off and it was out about 45 minutes when the pilot's voice came over the intercom saying, "We've encountered an engine problem and we're going to have to turn back." "Oh, Christ", I said to myself, "open the door and let me jump out, because I'm dead. If I'm not there tomorrow, I'm dead!" - Sally had about ten cousins who were really big, tough guys! The plane turned around and came back to L.A. and I made some frantic calls to her. The problem with the plane was fixed and we got back on, and I did manage to get back to New York, to Long Island, I think about 4:30 in the morning - it was that late, almost dawn.

I was a little bit tired at my wedding, but I remembered the vows - we had written our own vows and memorized them. We had a wonderful wedding and the reception was great.

We were in Majorca for a couple of days when I got a phone call from my agent saying, "They need you to come back. They want to test you again. And they want to lighten your hair." I said, "Tell 'em I'll be glad to do it, but I'm on my honeymoon...!" After it went back and forth for about two days, I was told that it was really important that I come back because they wanted to start [shooting on the series] in about two weeks - very quickly. They were willing to fly me back, and I stipulated, "and my bride. I'm not gonna leave her here alone!" They agreed to everything - "Okay, fly them both back, first-class, put 'em up in a hotel. We just need to get him back here!" Once I got back to Fox, they lightened my hair and I tested again - I was still testing for the part, [up against] five or six other guys. Then I got on a plane, my young bride and I, and we went back to New York. We were there two or three days when I found out Fox wanted me - I had the part.

I was told, "They're ready to start shooting, you've got to come back." So I said, "Hey, Sally, listen, good luck with your married life. I'll be out in California!"⁸⁰

Apart from a few interviews in the months after the wedding, Ron's love life ceased to be public property and thereafter he kept radio silence.

⁸⁰ Tom Weaver, *I Talked with a Zombie: Interviews With 23 Veterans of Horror and Sci-Fi*, 2008

About Roddy McDowall, Ron said

"Roddy McDowall was a wonderful gentleman, and an excellent actor. And, God, such patience, such endurance! He had to come to work at 3:30 in the morning because it took three hours for the makeup people to put those appliances on his face. He couldn't sleep while they put the appliances on, so he listened to classical music. He was a sweet guy and a bright guy, and I found him very interesting. He even had a sense of humor. ... Whatever he got paid, I'm sure it was not nearly enough for the amount of work that he did. I mean, consider his reputation, his body of work and consider what he endured, which was three hours of makeup every morning."⁸¹

About James Naughton, Ron said

"He was married and had a very nice wife and two little kids. One of my most vivid memories of him: we were on location on the back ranch at 20th Century, shooting something around a lake, and he was on one side of the lake and I was on the other. Suddenly he started singing with this beautiful baritone voice. I said, "Jim - I'm surprised - where'd that come from?" He was an excellent singer! Years later he won a Tony, Best Actor in a Musical, for *City of Angels*."⁸²

"Jim ... who's a very fine actor. ... He's a very good singer."⁸³

In later years Ron worked regularly in soap operas, where his friend John Aniston made a substantial living.

Name of Series	Character	Years / filming location
WHERE THE HEART IS	Steve Prescott	1973, New York
LOVE OF LIFE	Andrew Marriott	1976-80, New York
ANOTHER WORLD	Taylor Halloway	9 April 1980 – 25 September 1980, New York

In 1981 Ron and Sally were living in New York City and in August he travelled to Florida to appear in a play called **Vikings**. In one interview then he was quoted as saying he loved life in NYC and hoped never to have to move back to California.⁸⁴

But the performance to savor in Vikings is Harper's. His Peter is complex, tortured, sensitive, gruff, wounded. It's just wonderful.

(Miami Herald, 25 February 1981, p. 31)

CAPITOL	Jarrett Morgan/Baxter McCandless	1985-87, California
LOVING	Charles Hartman	1988, New York
GENERATIONS	Peter Whitmore	1990-91, California

⁸¹ *Under Ape Rule*, Starlog, Tom Weaver, May 2006, pp. 71-75

⁸² *Under Ape Rule*, Starlog, Tom Weaver, May 2006, pp. 71-75

⁸³ Ron Harper, interviewed by Jeff Krueger (Anaheim, CA) 27 July, 1997

⁸⁴ "Harper plunders his past for 'Vikings' role", Palm Beach Daily News, 24 February 1981.

Somewhere in the following years the marriage to Sally Stark ended. Ron continued to work on stage, in guest roles on TV and in movies, and eventually he did move back to California.

Later in the 1980's he married again, to Shirley, a lady not in the entertainment industry. Details are private but it is known that on Christmas Day 1988 they became parents of a baby girl they named Nicole. This was just 3 weeks before Ron's 56th birthday. His old friend John Aniston was tapped to be Nicole's godfather. Later this marriage too ended but he remained an active father and as a teenager Nicole accompanied him to conventions, where he signed autographs for fans and caught up with acting colleagues.

In 2005 Ron repartnered to another lady, Peggy, also not in the entertainment industry. She was the mother of two adult children and she had been widowed for a decade after a happy 40 year marriage. When she passed away in 2010 her family noted in her obituary:

"Ron Harper was the light of her life for the past five years and brought her a surprising, treasured and beautiful second act, appreciated by all who loved her."

This says a good deal more than the obligatory "Special friend of ..." that is often seen in obituaries.

Ron's last role was in **Kidnapped: The Hannah Anderson Story** in 2015.

In recent years Ron's health had declined and he moved into an assisted living facility. Ron passed of natural causes at his home in West Hills, Los Angeles on March 21, 2024, at the age of 91. He passed in his sleep overnight, having been visited by his family the day before. He is survived by his daughter, son-in-law and two granddaughters, Veronica and Harper.





James Joseph Naughton played Major Pete Burke, the other surviving astronaut. He was born 6 December 1945 in Middletown, Connecticut, the first child of James Joseph (II) and his wife Rosemary (nee) Walsh. Four years later his sister was born and in 1951 his younger brother David.

James is known to be proud of his Irish ancestry and all eight of his great-grandparents were immigrants from Ireland. His mother's father Owen Walsh was a police officer who was well-regarded by the local African-American community.

His parents married in February 1944 and were both teachers. His mother taught Business Education and his father taught (seemingly) everything else.⁸⁵ His parents were devout Catholics who remained active in their church communities all their lives, although James says he had stopped believing by the time he finished high school.

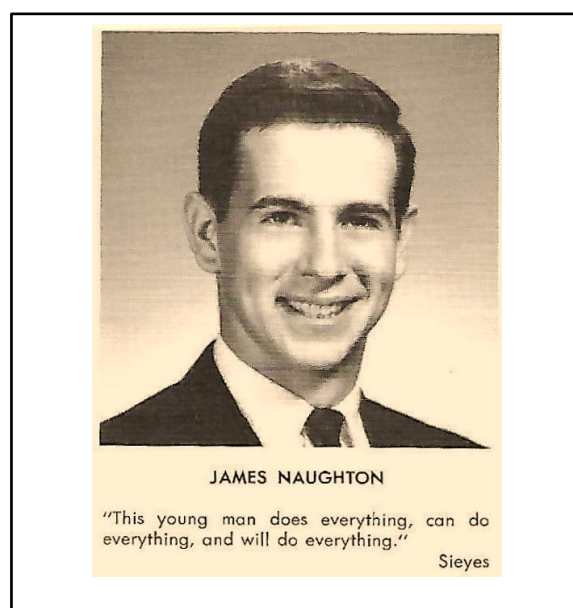
At Conard High School in West Hartford, James was Treasurer of the student council, he sang in the choir, and had lead roles in school productions: Emile De Becque in *South Pacific* in 1962, Billy Bigelow in *Carousel* in 1963 and Frank Butler in *Annie Get Your Gun*. He was in the Varsity club, played soccer and baseball⁸⁶, and was in the mountaineering club.⁸⁷

He and Pam Parsons were introduced at a party in 1963. Their younger sisters were friends and, convinced that the two would make an ideal couple, the sisters conspired to introduce them. It was love at first sight for James and they were together for the next fifty years.

⁸⁵ *Broadway Star James Naughton Is Working for Change, Here's The Thing with Alec Baldwin*, 30 April 2024

⁸⁶ *Where Westport Meets the World, James Naughton*, 28 November 2023

⁸⁷ Conard High School Year Book, 1962



Conard High School Year Book 1962

James went to Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, intending to do pre-med but he ended up taking a B.A. in American Literature. He worked as a removalist (both loading and driving) for Allied Van Lines over Summer,⁸⁸ while Pam went to Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont to study literature. They maintained a long distance relationship as he hitchhiked to Middlebury some weekends and she caught a bus to Providence other weekends. She often stayed the week, skipping her classes to be with him.⁸⁹

James and Pam were married in the St Thomas More Chapel at Yale University on 21 October 1967, with her sister Patricia as maid of honor and his brother David as best man. He was a couple of weeks short of 22 years of age and she had not long turned 21.⁹⁰

Many years later James told a reporter that in his life he had done

"one thing right—latching onto my wife. I can understand the dilemma people go through these days, wondering if they want to marry at all or if this person is the right one. But for Pamela and me, the decision made itself. It was intense and passionate and great and the best way to go about it."⁹¹

The following year their son Greg was born, followed three years later by daughter Keira.

James enrolled in the Master of Fine Arts program starting September 1967 at the School of Drama, Yale University and graduated in 1970. In 2010 his Yale classmate Henry Winkler said "Twenty-five actors started with me at Yale. Eleven finished the program. Three were asked into the company. James Naughton, who went on to win Tony Awards on Broadway, Jill Eikenberry of **LA Law** fame, and me."⁹²

⁸⁸ *James Naughton's Class Act*, Hartford Courant, 2 Dec, 1990, Page 145

⁸⁹ *Weren't we lucky, In death the gift of life*, Fairfield Scribes and WestportWRITES, 2020, pp. 151-168

⁹⁰ Hartford Courant, 22 October 1967.

⁹¹ *Life is sweet in the 'City of Angels'*, Brown Alumni Monthly, May 1990, pp.33 - 37

⁹² <https://www.crazedfanboy.com/spotlight/henrywinkler.html>

After graduation James went into the Yale Drama School repertory as his first paid acting job.⁹³ He has even said himself that his career started at the top.^{94 95}

1970, he has worked steadily – no mean feat in a cutthroat business. He was one of only two in his Yale class to be selected for a job with the Yale Repertory Theatre after graduation (the other was Henry Winkler, later famous as “The Fonz” on TV’s “Happy Days”). Scarcely a year out of acting school, Naughton broke into the New York theater scene in a big way with a principal role (Edmund) in Arvin Brown’s 1971 production of *A Long Day’s Journey Into Night*, which also starred Robert Ryan, Geraldine Fitzgerald,

and Stacy Keach. The show received Theater World, New York Drama Critics, and Vernon Rice awards, and it brought Naughton a slew of offers.

Naughton shortly thereafter made his film debut in another destined-to-be-classic production, the 1972 movie *The Paper Chase*, in which he played Kevin Brooks, the self-doubting law student who commits suicide. The film, and Naughton’s performance in it, were acclaimed by critics and audiences alike, and Naughton seemed poised on the edge of stardom. But after only a few more

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In a 1971 interview he made the following observations about acting as an art form:

Not that he can’t get that bigger role, he recently turned down a starring assignment on Broadway because it didn’t meet his criteria, it wouldn’t contribute to his growth as an actor and as an artist which only he can gauge.

“An artist has to grow and he does it by growing down into himself,” says Naughton. “You do this by taking different roles, seeing what you can do. A painter doesn’t paint the same picture over and over again because he doesn’t grow that way and its the same with an actor.”

“An actor has only one instrument to use, himself; his mind, his heart, his soul. That’s it. He has no pen or brush. It’s all in here,” he says pressing his slim fingers against his chest.

“When a painter finishes a work he has a canvas in front of him, a writer has a story or a novel to show but an actor—once it’s done it’s gone.”

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ence. To say that Naughton has made a point of being with his children is an understatement. “I’ve been much more of a hands-on parent. When my kids were little, if I wasn’t working at the time and the preschool had an epidemic that ran through the faculty

— which frequently happened — they would call my wife and me and we would take charge of about 50 kids,” he says.

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⁹³ *Where Westport Meets the World*, James Naughton, 28 November 2023

⁹⁴ <https://broadwaypodcastnetwork.com/podcasts/behind-the-curtain-broadway-s-living-legends-podcast/240-james-naughton-actor/477>

⁹⁵ *Actor’s Angels Heaven-sent* The Miami Herald Sun, 3 June 1990.

⁹⁶ *Life is sweet in the ‘City of Angels’*, Brown Alumni Monthly, May 1990, pp.33 - 37

⁹⁷ Hartford Courant, 27 Nov, 1971, p. 14

JAMES: I was still in school when Greg was born, and sometimes I even took him to class with me. When you're a very young parent, as we were, you tend to take the baby everywhere, all the time. When Kiera was 4, I had to spend a week in Toronto, so I took her with me. She was great. If she needed a nap, I'd put a parka down and she'd fall asleep on it. They were both easy to take along.

I got involved with Little League because of him — so involved I'd turn down work in the spring to coach. It was a wonderful period for both of us. I'd played a little ball in college, so I took to it. I even coached a girls' softball team. I taught them how to throw, catch and hit, then I had to motivate them to win.

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As with many other actors, the economic downturn in New York that started in 1972 had caused a downturn in theatre revenue and so in 1973 he moved the family to Hollywood seeking work. In an interview with Anne Diffily in 1990¹⁰⁰ he said

"I had turned down the role (POTA) for about three or four weeks. But I finally got to the point where I had a rent payment that was two weeks overdue, and I had about \$300 left in the bank, and I had a wife and two kids. So I said yes. We made the series for about five months, and that was it. I made a very dear friend in Roddy McDowall."

In another interview with Barry Dougherty in 2002¹⁰¹ he said

"I wasn't dying to do that show (POTA) but I was living in LA and had a \$400 rent payment that was about two weeks overdue, which was a lot of money at the time. I had two children, I was in my twenties and I had said no to this project three times. Finally, another week went by and I said, 'I guess I better say yes.'

But with the money I made I bought the house I was renting."

Roddy McDowall first invited James and Pam to his regular Friday night dinner party, on the night **Planet of the Apes** debuted on TV. Other guests that night included Vincent Price, his wife Coral Browne and Genevieve Bujold.

Roddy then invited them for the following Friday night but James and Pam had promised Greg (then 6YO) and Keira (then 3YO) to stay home and watch the debut of **The Gladiators** episode with them. Hence they missed their only opportunity to meet Elizabeth Taylor.

Other dinner parties they later attended at Roddy's home included guests Jessica Tandy, George Axelrod, Joan Rivers and Dennis Hopper.

⁹⁸ *He's a father figure on and off screen*, Candace Burke-Block, The Courier News, 5 November, 1988, p. 9-10

⁹⁹ James in *Dad's my role model*, Daily News, 31 March 1996, Spotlight p. 22

¹⁰⁰ *Life is sweet in the 'City of Angels'*, Brown Alumni Monthly, May 1990, pp.33 - 37

¹⁰¹ *The Cool Naughton*, Barry Dougherty 'The Friars Club Epistle' (2002)

In his response (received on 10 December) to my letter of 8 November, James stated

"Roddy was a really wonderful person. Probably the best thing about doing POTAs, for me, was our friendship. ... When Roddy came to New York and I was in **City of Angels** or **Chicago**, we'd go out after he came to the shows.

He died much too soon. And he's been missed by all of his friends, of whom there were gazillions. He kept his friends. I enjoyed all of our times together, and our days on the set were better for me because he was a part of them."

James' brother David had his first acting role in a brief appearance in the **Planet of the Apes** episode **The Surgeon** as Dr Stole. Over the next few years David became well known for a long-running "Be a Pepper" ad campaign (1977) for beverage maker Dr Pepper, he had a minor hit with a disco song called Makin' It (no. 5 on the Billboard Hot 100 in 1979) and he starred in the movie **An American Werewolf in London** (1981).

When asked about how he approaches acting he said that the players (actors) play together with give and take¹⁰², and this is terminology I've heard him use in a number of interviews online. He says that the 'players' are called that because they are on stage playing together. The way he describes it is almost like a ball game where they are passing the ball around.

Although he counts television among the childhood inspirations that led to his acting career, he says, "Somewhere, they stopped making good TV and I've only been in bad TV, in the crummy, commercially exploitive stuff." But his roles in *Fareday and Co.*, *Planet of the Apes*, and *Trauma Center*, he says unabashedly, helped keep the kids in school. "Sitcoms are very seductive," he says, explaining that they are shot on banker's hours. "And they pay you ridiculous amounts of money. But they are just not rewarding, they don't do anything for your soul."

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¹⁰²<https://broadwaypodcastnetwork.com/podcasts/behind-the-curtain-broadway-s-living-legends-podcast/240-james-naughton-actor/477>

¹⁰³ *James Naughton's Class Act*, Hartford Courant, 2 December 1990, pp 145-147 and 155

He has also said he works from the inside out, using his own experiences to understand the character's motivation, but he has worked from the outside in (taking cues from the script) when necessary. He views the role of director as that of an actor's editor, giving feedback, prompting improvements or shifting focus as necessary.

The Tony "doesn't change the way I view it from inside here," he says, spreading a hand across his chest as if he were reaching for his inner being.

He sees himself only a third of the way into what he hopes will be a 60-year acting career. He says he strives today for precisely the same goal he set when he graduated from Yale Drama School two decades ago. "I still want to be the best actor I can be," he says, but he distinguishes between being an actor and being a star. "The most important thing for me is the work and having the respect of my colleagues."

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¹⁰⁴ *James Naughton's Class Act*, Hartford Courant, 2 December 1990, pp 145-147 and 155



Interviewed for Brown University in 1990, James said:

"When we lived in Los Angeles, I realized that my kids were outdoors all the time—the weather was always nice. But that meant that the only thing that was important to them was dirt bikes and skateboards. Among their friends, there were a lot of unhappy kids from broken homes. I said to myself 'This is not a healthy environment.'

At the same time, my wife had a very elderly grandmother in Connecticut, and I wanted our kids to know her. You can't just say, 'Well, someday we'll do that,' because someday they may not be around anymore. We had a large extended family back here that I wanted my children to be exposed to, and we were spending a lot of money flying back for Christmas and summer vacations.

So we sold our house in L.A. and bought a 200-year-old farmhouse we still live in. I determined that if I had to, I would go out to L.A. to work. And I've done that, but I've never been away from home for more than two or three weeks at a time. There were other jobs I didn't take, particularly Broadway musicals, because they usually went on the road for anywhere between a month and a year before coming to New York."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ *Life is sweet in the 'City of Angels'*, Brown Alumni Monthly, May 1990, pp.33 - 37

Lawrence Van Gelder of the New York Times reported on 2 September 1977, p. 46:

"But by last summer, Mr. Naughton, who had also appeared in two movies — "The Paper Chase" and "Second Wind," which has yet to be released here, was fed up with life in Los Angeles. Missing the East, he took his wife, Pamela, and their son, Gregory, 9 years old; and their daughter, Keira, 6, to the coast of Maine.

He was sitting on a rock, staring at the ocean, thinking the thoughts that were to lead to a decision to settle in the East (the Naughtons live now in an old house in Fairfield County) when the phone call came to ask him to audition for "I Love My Wife." " ¹⁰⁶

There are two sides to Naughton: dedicated family man and risk-taker. Sometimes these two personas merge, as in 1976 when the Naughton family — wife Pam, son Gregory (now 20) and daughter Keira (now 17) — moved to the East Coast.

"We were living in Los Angeles," he says, "and we were visiting a family in Connecticut (where the couple grew up). I said, 'I've made an executive decision: We're not going back to L.A., we're moving to Connecticut!' Pam asked, 'What about a home? What about the kids' schools? What about a job?' Within a week we had rented a house on the beach in Westport, the kids were in school and I landed a job (the lead in 'I Love My Wife')."

Six months later the family found a new home — a 1790s farmhouse in Fairfield County, Conn. Naughton had the California house sold and the contents moved to Connecticut without ever returning to the West Coast.

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ers. His dark hair is lightly touched with gray; his face shows only the barest hint of wrinkles. His physique, however, is anything but fortysomething. At home every morning, he does a round of pushups and sit-ups, and on stage every evening he does an eye-popping body flip over an 8-foot metal bar, a move he created for the show.

Hartford Courant, 2 Dec, 1990, p. 146

With the children in middle school, Pam went back to University¹⁰⁸ and earned a Master's of Social Work from Fordham University, then worked at Hallbrook Hospital (Westport) and in the special ed department at Weston Middle School. In 1995 she put her people talents to work as Director of Development for the Blue Light Theater Co. in NYC, helmed by Greg.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/09/02/archives/new-jersey-weekly-new-face-james-naughton-bedchamber-music.html>

¹⁰⁷ *He's a father figure on and off screen*, Candace Burke-Block, The Courier News, 5 November, 1988, p. 9

¹⁰⁸ *Weren't we lucky, In death the gift of life*, Fairfield Scribes and WestportWRITES, 2020, pp. 151-168

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.courant.com/obituaries/pamela-parsons-naughton-weston-ct/>



James with his mother Rosemary and his wife Pamela at the *I Love My Wife* Opening Night Party at Gallagher's in New York City on 18 April, 1977.

In an interview in 1990 Greg (now a singer-songwriter and actor) said:

Considering all the work he did, he was around for me a lot. I think he really enjoyed being a family man, so he didn't take too many jobs that would take him away from us. When I was 5, we lived in L.A. while he did TV. We moved back here about the time I was in danger of puberty. That's confusing enough for a kid; in L.A., it would've been chaotic. When we moved back, dad coached Little League teams. He usually won, too.



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In an interview in April 1999, Keira (now an actor, director and drama coach) recollected

"It was great having him as a father. He was always going on field trips and acting as a chaperon. For him, fatherhood was a priority - to be there. If he was doing a television show or something that was shooting in L.A. he would fly back to Connecticut on the red-eye for the weekend, just to be with us. I can't imagine how exhausting that must have been for him. But he would be there. Saturday morning, we would wake up, and there he was."¹¹¹

Naughton thinks of himself as an actor who sings. "I always sang. My father sang to us in the car. We would sing in the car back and forth to grandma's house on Sundays." At Conard High School in West Hartford, Naughton sang in the chorus, but baseball was his first love. In his junior year, he was cast as Emile de Becque in "South Pacific."

WAG magazine, *James Naughton passionate about the arts*, 4 January 2015

¹¹⁰ Greg in *Dad's my role model*, Daily News, 31 March 1996, Spotlight p. 22

¹¹¹ <https://broadwaytovegas.com/April19,1999.html>

"They made me an offer to star in 'Trauma Center,' " recalled the tall, slim actor. "But it was complicated because I live in Connecticut and I didn't want to move back to California. We have a 200-year-old house, my kids are in school and my wife is beginning a career as a psychiatric social worker. I didn't want to uproot all that, so for a while it looked like I wouldn't take the job."

(1983)

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1990, *City of Angels*, for which he won his first Tony.

It is an irony that Naughton's biggest stage success has come in a musical, and in the show that is being hailed as a revival of the American musical. One of the running conflicts in his career is the alternating passion and angst with which he has approached musical theater.

He's been singing since high school when he captured the leading role in *South Pacific*.

signature song. Geraldine Fitzgerald remembers him arriving early at rehearsals for the revival of *Long Day's Journey*, and belting out songs on stage in the empty Promenade Theatre. "He really wanted so much to be a singer," she remembers. Yet he deliberately avoided musicals.

"This business is almost unforgiving," he explains. You can get pigeonholed as an actor who does musical comedy, then nobody thinks you can do serious drama. It's a much easier transition to go from an actor who sings than the other way around."

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In 1996, James was offered the role of Billy Flynn in the revival of *Chicago*, being four performances at City Centres Encores in New York City.

"Every single number the whole night long, the audience roared back at us," said Naughton, who won a Tony for his performance. "They literally roared. It's the most wonderful sound I've ever heard in the theatre. And what became apparent that night, and what I thought at the time, was this audience is starved for this kind of performing. All that we're doing is the most basic kind of in-your-face performing. There weren't any falling chandeliers or helicopters. It was just what actors, singers and dancers do best."

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The production was then taken to Broadway and in 1997 he won his second Tony for Lead Actor in a Musical. It's now the longest-running musical on Broadway.

James invested not only in the Broadway production but also in the roadshow production and the London production.¹¹⁵

¹¹² *He's a star commuter*, Minneapolis Tribune, 23-29 October 1983, p. 38

¹¹³ *James Naughton's Class Act*, Hartford Courant, 2 December 1990, pp 145-147 and 155

¹¹⁴ <https://playbill.com/article/their-kind-of-town-neuwirth-naughton-and-grey-recall-the-rebirth-of-chicago-com-136295>

"I put my money where my mouth was. I've never invested in any other show. On the other hand, I've never had the advantage of seeing what the audience reaction was. I'm among the happiest people you know about how this show has lasted as long as it has."

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He acts, he says, because "It's a lot of fun. It's the same kind of fun as when I was a kid. And to be able to continue to do that, it's sort of like playing baseball. You see these guys who are 40 years old and they're still playing ball and they say, 'I'm the luckiest man in the world to be able to play this kids' game for so long and so successfully.' And it's the same with acting."

Thousand Oaks Star
Tue, Dec 19, 1989 · Page 10

"I love the interaction with other human beings, and not just the audience. This is a team sport we play here. It's a collaboration. There's a particular kind of satisfaction and thrill that I get out of working with other people. I couldn't be a novelist. I couldn't be a painter."

"Actor's Angels Heaven-sent"
The Miami Herald Sun, 3 June 1990

Despite all the fame and money television and film offer, for Naughton, the essence of acting is what happens on stage. It is in the theater, with its dangerous and unforgiving qualities, its relentless demands for precision, even its potential for boredom in the routine of nightly performances, that he feels most fulfilled. "It's like walking a tight-rope," he says in an intense half-whisper. "It's a thrill."

Motioning toward the stage where he gives life to Stone eight times a week, Naughton launches into a monologue describing a near-mystical experience that transpires between actor and audience in a darkened theater. "Actors are all sort of solitary folk; we're in

business for ourselves, but we do our thing together, and it is that togetherness that is important for me. What we do is ephemeral. It happens between 8 and 11 at night out there in front of 1,200 people; 25 or 30 of us do something out there on the stage. It's much more than acting, it's Robin Wagner's sets, it's Larry Gelbart's book, it's Paul Gallo's lighting. I play a part in this whole communal moment and the thing I'm interested in is the emotional life of it, how it speaks to me and speaks through me. Those 1,200 people sit out there in the dark, and they feel connected. It is this thing that we all do together that I feed on, that I take a lot of nourishment from."

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¹¹⁵ *Broadway Star James Naughton Is Working for Change*, Here's The Thing with Alec Baldwin, 30 April 2024

¹¹⁶ <https://playbill.com/article/their-kind-of-town-neuwirth-naughton-and-grey-recall-the-rebirth-of-chicago-com-136295>

Although he has only directed a few times he has said

“Directing is my favorite thing to do. My whole life in the theater world is the rehearsal process – the figuring out how we tell the story.

It’s the most fun I’ve ever had. I get to use all the tools and work with set designers, lighting and all the actors.”¹¹⁸

Paul Newman directed James in **The Glass Menagerie** when they filmed the stage play in 1987. The two couples (James and Pam, Paul and Joanne Woodward) often dined together. Paul and James also both enjoyed playing badminton, fishing, drinking beer and shooting pool so they spent a lot of time together and became friends. After 9/11 Joanne as Artistic Director of Westport Country Playhouse, approached James to direct Paul in **Our Town**. Paul wanted to play the Stage Manager but was very shy and was terrified to make eye contact with the audience. Putting Paul at ease became a main focus for James as Director so they rehearsed at the White Barn Theatre.

He enjoyed this experience so much he once said to Pam as he left the house

“Just wanting to go on record here, this is the most fun I’ve ever had going to work.”¹¹⁹

Q: How did you two meet?

A: He directed me in "Glass Menagerie." I had done stage productions with Joanne. While working with him, we learned we lived about four minutes from each other, and he invited me to his house for dinner. We both liked to shoot pool and fish. It turned into a friendship.

Q: You're a pool player?

A: I spent a lot of time in high school and college shooting pool in Hartford with my best friend, Tom Lorch, who was a guidance counselor at Sedgwick Middle School in West Hartford. We had a lot of fun.

One of the outcomes of his friendship with Paul Newman was his ongoing involvement in the Hole In The Wall Gang foundation, to give children with serious illnesses the chance to “raise a little hell.”

“My association with The Hole in the Wall Gang gives me the most satisfaction. Paul took me up in 1988 when it was being built and I’ve been on the board of directors the last 15 years.” Naughton directs the camp’s galas, reaching out to the talented performers who take part.

He gives his time to many other charities, too, among them The Marfan Foundation, which is researching a cure for the genetic disorder; 52nd Street Project, which matches inner city kids with theater professionals to create works, and SAY: The Stuttering Association for the Young. Recently, he joined the board of Symphony Space.

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¹¹⁷ *James Naughton’s Class Act*, Hartford Courant, 2 December 1990, pp 145-147 and 155

¹¹⁸ WAG magazine, *James Naughton passionate about the arts*, 4 January 2015

¹¹⁹ <https://broadwaypodcastnetwork.com/podcasts/behind-the-curtain-broadway-s-living-legends-podcast/240-james-naughton-actor/477>

¹²⁰ <https://today.uchc.edu/headlines/2008/oct08/places.html>

Another charity James has been involved with is the Jordan Porco Foundation for youth mental health and suicide prevention.

If you want a quick look at who James Naughton really is, this 20 minute interview captures his essence. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VdWx8Vau_M



Dancing with Pam at a wedding in 1999.

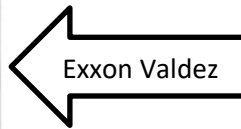
In 2007, the Naughtons dogs found a fawn with a broken leg in the garden. James phoned *Wildlife In Crisis*, a local wildlife rescue and rehab charity and was told to bring the fawn in.

With Pam driving and James cradling the fawn on his lap, they drove to the WIC refuge at 8pm that night. Dara Reid and her husband Peter were running the rescue and rehab out of their home, which was consequently filled with raptors, owls, a coyote, rabbits, skunks and squirrels, many of them babies. James could see WIC needed help (both funds and volunteers) so he arranged a feature article in the local Westport Magazine. He was in that first photo shoot and continues to this day supporting the work of *Wildlife In Crisis*.¹²²

¹²¹ WAG magazine, *James Naughton passionate about the arts*, 4 January 2015

¹²² *Where Westport Meets the World, James Naughton*, 28 November 2023

Often, the topic is the environment, a cause that has increasingly engaged him since his 1989 trip to Alaska, where he met fishermen and marine biologists involved in the Prince William Sound cleanup. That led him to do a four-minute spot for public television on the oil spill; it has been shown on Hartford's Channel 24.



Hartford Courant, 2 Dec, 1990

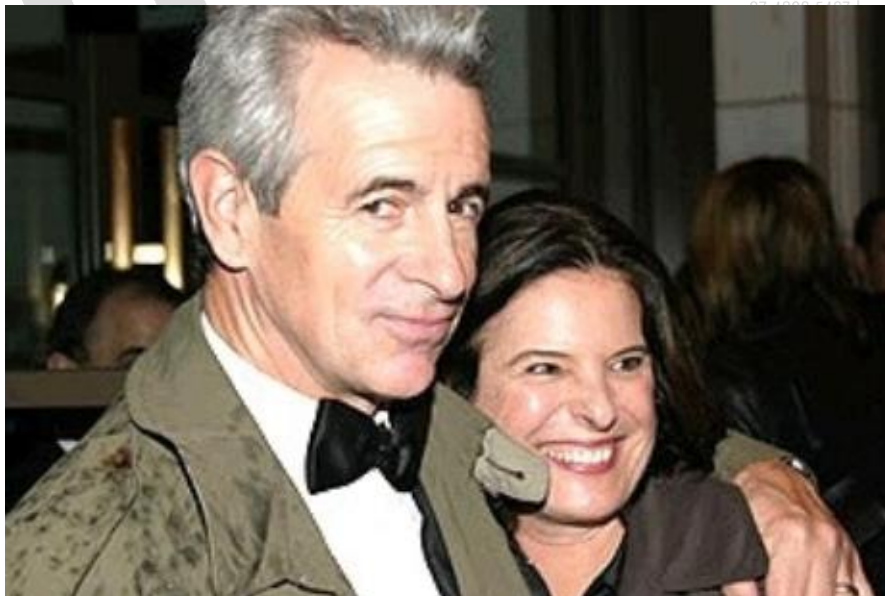
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Cabaret is another arena in which Naughton shines. Not only do you have the pleasure of his velvety bass-baritone voice, but he sets songs up with a story. "Storytelling" is a word that comes up a lot when you talk to Naughton, who likes to juxtapose songs that pluck the heartstrings with edgy numbers. "He is very methodical about the material he chooses," says John Oddo, his musical director and arranger. "He has to have a point of view with it. The material is eclectic with songs like 'Stardust' and Dave Frishberg's 'I'm Hip'."

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In 1999 multiple reviewers raved about his one man cabaret **Street of Dreams**.^{124 125 126}



December 2003

¹²³ WAG magazine, *James Naughton passionate about the arts*, 4 January 2015

¹²⁴ David Kaufman, *Naughton's 'Street' paved with golden notes*, Daily News, 5 February 1999, p. 525

¹²⁵ Stephen Holden, *Naughton walks a 'Street of Dreams'*, The Berkshire Eagle, 8 February 1999, p. 20

¹²⁶ John Podhoretz, *Naughton turns in a dreamy performance*, New York Post, 8 February 1999

Greg married Kelli O'Hara on 28 July 2007. In May 2009 Pam was diagnosed with malignant pancreatic cancer and a month later Greg and Kelli's son (James and Pam's first grandchild) Owen was born. There followed four years of pursuing every treatment available to beat the cancer. Keira married Ben Forgash on 12 March 2011 and their son Charlie was born July 2012. Pam passed away on 9 April 2013, just a few hours after saying to James

"Weren't we lucky to have found each other when we were just babies?"

I encourage you to purchase the book "In death, the gift of life", published by Fairfield Scribes and WestportWRITES, 2020, to read more about these four years.

If you'd rather listen than read, this is an equally poignant source:

<https://headgum.com/a-good-cry/james-naughton>

Several years later James joined the campaign for Connecticut to implement Aid In Dying legislation, a campaign he is still actively involved with. His experience in caring for Pam and being unable to grant her wish to be spared extended suffering spurs him on.

All family members have a wide assortment of talents and interests, and sometimes they overlap. Naughton has performed a number of cabaret shows and concerts. Father and son performed in an off-Broadway production of "Golden Boy." The three of them performed in an American Songbook concert as part of Jazz at Lincoln Center. And they all performed — including O'Hara — for a staged reading of "The Philadelphia Story" at Westport Playhouse.

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In recent years he's been working more with his family — Greg and Kelli, and Keira.

In 2014 Keira directed James in **Cedars**, written by Erik Tarloff, and performed in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.¹²⁸ This was only Keira's second foray into directing.



Keira and James with the dogs Mike and Harry, 2014

¹²⁷ Hartford Courant, 20 July 2014, p. G6

¹²⁸ Christopher Wallenberg, *The Boston Globe*, 29 Jul, 2014, p. G8



Kelli and Greg, Sara and James,
Owen and Charlotte.
2 May 2017.

Today James is married to his second wife Sara and he is still working in guest roles on television. He takes part in local theatre productions and recently has been giving interviews on stage and radio. He played a police officer in Greg's 2018 semi-autobiographical movie **The Independents** and has made three recent independent short films: **Past Prologue** (2022, 14 mins), **Not The Same Clarence** (with Greg) (2023, 14 mins) and **Silver Sizzle** (with Sara) (2024, 14 mins). He is involved in Symphony Space, a performing arts centre on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and he records audio books and dozens of voice-overs. He is also an active and involved grandfather, encouraging a new generation of performers.



CRICKHOLME
Research & Reports

Susan Cunningham
PO Box 24
Rockhampton Q 4700

archandreports.com.au | ABN 28 481 869 679