

Holy Matt-rimony! Lauer's model wedding

OCTOBER 19, 1998

# People

weekly



Darryl Strawberry's  
brave battle



Today's Matt Lauer  
& Annette Bening



David and Courteney in June

## Courteney Cox **ENGAGED!**

Forever single on *Friends*,  
she finds love with *Scream*  
costar David Arquette

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Actor Roddy McDowall was revered as the consummate gentleman.

WINSON MILDROW/GLOBE PHOTOS

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How does Dana Kressierer get hundreds of people to volunteer for community service? By recruiting only singles in search of dates

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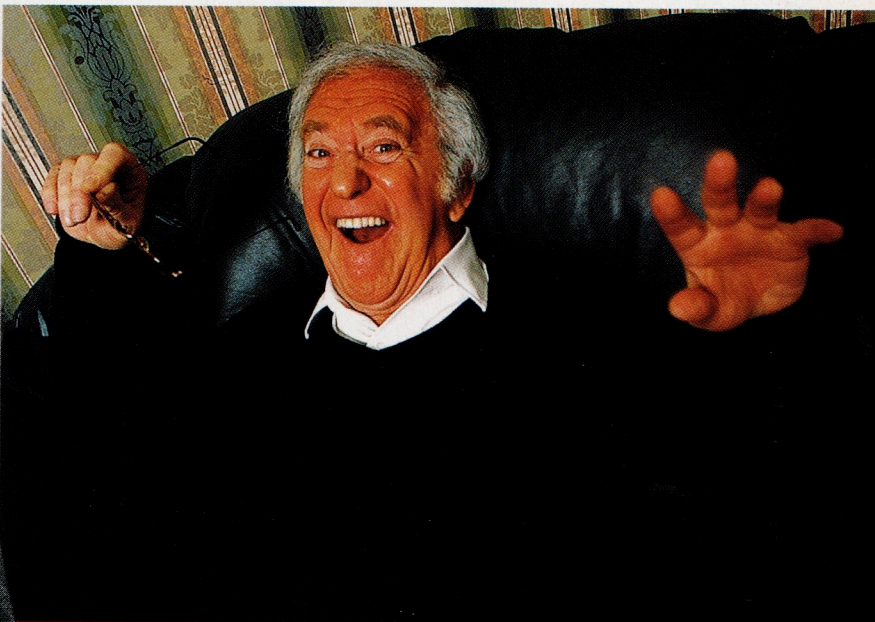
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With a newfound film career at 72, wacky TV comedian Soupy Sales is up to his old tricks again

NEAL PRESTON



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**SEQUEL** "Baby boomers who grew up watching me," says resurgent TV funnyman Soupy Sales, "are putting me in their movies."

#### 161 Farewell

Onscreen since childhood, and in a life devoted to camaraderie, actor Roddy McDowall never failed to charm. Hollywood loses the best friend it ever had

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# Best Buddy

Actor, photographer and raconteur Roddy McDowall dies at 70, leaving a hole in the heart of Hollywood

**W**hen Carol Burnett got a phone call from Roddy McDowall late last month, she began telling him about her recent shoulder surgery. He listened patiently, asked how she was feeling and seemed genuinely concerned. After a while, she casually asked, "So, hi, what's up with you?" McDowall, it turns out, was calling to say good-bye. "I was floored," says Burnett. "But he said, 'I'm fine—I'm home, I'm not in pain. I'm ready for my segue.' He was calming me down."

In the final days of his life, as al-

ways, McDowall was thinking of others. The actor, who succumbed to cancer in his Studio City, Calif., home on Oct. 3, had known of his illness since April. When it was pronounced terminal in August, says friend Dennis Osborne, who helped care for him in his last days and was with him when he died, McDowall kept the gravity of his situation from many of his friends because "he didn't want to be a nuisance." And when *Daily Variety*—much to McDowall's dismay—reported his condition on Sept. 18, one day after his 70th birthday, he spent the next

week writing and calling friends.

There were far too many to count. McDowall "was devoted to the art of being a friend," says Joanne Carson (Johnny Carson's ex-wife). Over the course of a 62-year career that spanned film, television and theater, McDowall was soulmate and confidant to many of Hollywood's biggest stars, from Lauren Bacall to Elizabeth Taylor to Johnny Depp. Yet the discreet McDowall never disclosed his fellow stars' intimacies. "Roddy was a complete treasure trove of information about Hollywood," says pal Paul Reubens (aka Pee-wee Herman), who worked with McDowall on a 1982 TV show. "[But] I never heard Roddy say a bad word about anyone." As McDowall told the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* in 1996, "I've had a life crowded by incident and spotted with fascinating individuals. I'll just keep the stories to myself."

For McDowall, the narrative began at age 8, when the London native and son of a merchant seaman



McDowall (on a movie set in Spain in 1981) "had this wonderful humor and twinkle in his eye all the time," says friend Angela Lansbury.

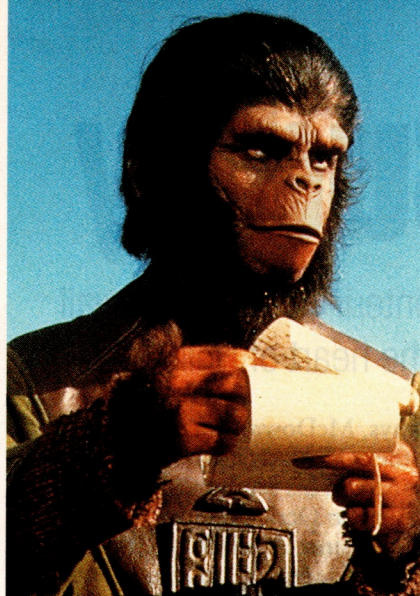




ARCHIVE PHOTOS

McDowall (in '43's *Lassie Come Home*) said he came to feel trapped in kids' roles.

and a stage mother first appeared in British films. In 1940, his family moved to Hollywood to escape the bombing of London and, a year later, while attending the 20th Century Fox school for child actors, the 13-year-old starred in John Ford's *How Green Was My Valley*. After *Valley* came twin peaks: 1943's *My*



KOBAL COLLECTION

*Planet of the Apes* was "agony," McDowall recently told PEOPLE. "It was miserably hot."

*Friend Flicka* and *Lassie Come Home*, in which he met Taylor. But soon he found himself typecast. "I was playing 14-year-old parts until I was 23," he told *Coronet* in 1958.

The frustrated actor moved to New York City in 1951 to reshape his career onstage. He scored roles on Broadway as a killer in *Compulsion*

(1957) and as the evil Mordred in *Camelot* in 1960; that same year he won both a Tony (for *The Fighting Cock*) and an Emmy (for the drama *Not Without Honor*). He returned to film, appearing as Octavian in 1963's Taylor-Richard Burton epic *Cleopatra*. And in 1968, he starred in the role that came to define him for a new generation of filmgoers: the sympathetic simian Cornelius in *Planet of the Apes*. "Roddy was such a nice man, a real decent guy, a gentleman," says *Apes* costar Charlton Heston.

He was also a workaholic who appeared in more than 140 films. (In his final role, McDowall will be heard as the voice of Mr. Soil in the animated *A Bug's Life*, due in November.) His famous friendships led to a successful second career as a celebrity photographer. The actor, who never married, published four volumes of *Double Exposure*—coffee-table collections of celebrity portraits—from 1966 to 1993. The books, says Angela Lansbury, who worked with him in 1971's *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, "are an extraordinary, very personal history"

of the film business.

"He's still taking pictures," says Mickey Rooney, "but from a better angle now." McDowall also worked tirelessly to raise money for the Motion Picture & Television Fund's retirement community, where his only sibling, Virginia, 71, lives.

Above all, say friends, he lived his life with dignity—to the last moment. "When he realized the battle was over," says Joanne Carson, "he spent the last few weeks of his life with laughter and joy." She, like Carol Burnett, will never forget the classy way he broke the news to her just before his birthday. "I have been battling something I cannot win," he told her, "and I am withdrawing from the field with honor."



EVERETT COLLECTION

"His life was his genius," says Elizabeth Taylor (with McDowall in the '40s). "His love was a blessing."

- Dan Jewel
- Champ Clark in Los Angeles