

Elizabeth Taylor

MARIE-CHRISTINE O'CALLAGHAN

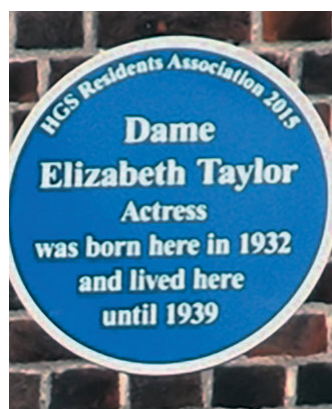
Elizabeth Rosmond Taylor was born in London in 1932. She lived with her American parents at 8 Wildwood Road in the Suburb. Her mother, Sara, was a former stage actress and her father, Francis, an art dealer. Shortly after her birth, Elizabeth was diagnosed with 'distichiasis' a rare medical disorder, also known as 'double lashes'. Fortunately, she was lucky enough to suffer none of the serious consequences that can be associated with the condition.

In 1939, the family moved to Hollywood and, at the age of ten, Elizabeth made her film debut in *There's One Born Every Minute*. On the first day of filming someone said: "get that girl off the set – she has too much mascara". Her eyes became her greatest asset because as well as amazing lashes, they were a vibrant dark blue that appeared to be purple when exposed to certain lighting.

Elizabeth's breakout role came in 1944 when, aged twelve, she starred in *National Velvet*. She would go on to become a Hollywood film star and was the first actress to earn \$1 million when she starred in *Cleopatra*.

Taylor won two Academy Awards, the first for *Butterfield 8* (1960) even though she apparently hated the film and on hearing the Oscar results declared "I still say it stinks"; the second Oscar was for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Taylor married a total of eight times. In 1950, aged seventeen, she married Conrad Hilton Jr. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer paid the bill for their lavish 600 guest wedding. They divorced in 1951. In 1952 she married Michael Wilding and had two sons with him. The couple divorced in 1957 and Taylor married Mike Todd in



the same year and had a daughter. Tragically, only a year later in 1958, Todd died in a plane crash leaving Taylor devastated. She then married Eddie Fisher in 1959 though she later said that she only married him because of her grief over Mike Todd. Taylor and Fisher divorced in 1964 and she married Richard Burton the same year. They adopted a daughter, Maria Burton. This marriage was tumultuous and they famously divorced and married each other twice, the second of their marriages lasting just 9 months. Taylor's last two husbands were John Warner (married in 1976) and finally, Larry Fortensky who she married in 1991, divorcing him five years later in 1996.

Elizabeth was raised as a Christian Scientist, but converted to Judaism in 1959. Although two of her husbands – Mike Todd and Eddie Fisher – were Jewish, Taylor said she did not convert because of them, but had wanted to do so for a long time as she felt "there was comfort and dignity and hope for me in this ancient religion that [has] survived for four thousand years... I feel as if I have been a Jew all my life."

Taylor's jewellery collection was vast, it included 'La Peregrina', a pearl whose history spans almost 500 years, which Burton gave her on Valentine's Day 1969. Burton also gifted her a 33.19 carat diamond ring which came to be known as 'The Elizabeth Taylor Diamond'. After her death, her jewellery collection was auctioned at Christie's and sold for a record \$115.9 million. The proceeds were given to The Elizabeth Taylor Foundation to benefit AIDS research.

Taylor was honoured with several awards for her philanthropic work. She was made a Knight of the French Legion d'Honneur in 1987, received the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award in 1993, the Screen Actors' Guild Lifetime Achievement Award for Humanitarian service in 1997 and the GLAAD Vanguard Award in 2000. In the same year she became a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire. In 2001 she was awarded the Presidential Citizen Medal.

Elizabeth Taylor died on the 23rd of March 2011. Ever true to her lifelong reputation she arranged to be fifteen minutes late for her own funeral.



That Elizabeth Taylor diamond



Elizabeth Taylor star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame



Glamour, 60s style

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