



Marilyn

THE BLONDE BOMBSHELL



Early 65 years after Marilyn Monroe's death, few have reached the actress' level of notoriety. As we approach what would have been her 100th birthday on June 1, her image is emblazoned in pop culture, film, fashion and landscapes. Thousands try to replicate her look and essence each year through impersonations, costumes and allusions. At the turn of the century, she was recognized as the Sexiest Woman of the Century by People magazine and Playboy's No. 1 Sex Star of the 20th Century. However, the star's life was riddled with heartbreak and strife, leading her to take her own life at age 36.



EARLY LIFE: Monroe was born Norma Jeane Mortenson on June 1, 1926, in Los Angeles, Calif., to Gladys Baker, and was baptized with her mother's last name. Though DNA testing proved in 2022 that her father was Charles Stanley Gifford, he was not present in Monroe's childhood. When her mother was institutionalized due to mental health issues, Monroe was sent to foster care and orphanages until she was placed with family friend Grace McKee Goddard.



CAREER Discovered by photographer David Conover in 1944, Monroe wasn't an overnight success. She first appeared on screen in "Dangerous Years" in 1947, but what cemented her stardom was her role in the 1953 film, "Niagara." That same year, she appeared on the cover of the first Playboy magazine. At the time of her death, she appeared in 32 films and had won three Golden Globe awards — two for World Film Favorite and one Best Actress award for "Some Like it Hot" in 1960. She was also a four-time Photoplay Award winner.



MARRIAGES: When Goddard and her family had to relocate, 16-year-old Monroe married Jimmy Dougherty. The union lasted until Monroe's modeling career began to grow before they divorced after WWII. In 1954, she married Joe DiMaggio (pictured above) only to divorce eight months later. She and "Death of a Salesman" playwright Arthur Miller were wed from 1956 and 1961 before divorcing. In the end, she and DiMaggio were close friends in her final years. After her death, he arranged for roses to be placed on her crypt thrice a week for 20 years.



MAKING A STAND: Monroe wasn't afraid of making her beliefs known and championing causes. While honeymooning with DiMaggio, she traveled to Korea to perform for soldiers stationed there. She also stayed committed to Miller while he was being investigated by the House Un-American Committee, even after he announced their plans to marry during his testimony. She also stood up for civil rights, promising the owner of the popular Mocambo nightclub that she would be at the front table every night if he booked Ella Fitzgerald (above).

RIGHT: Marilyn Monroe mimics Betty Grable's famous WWII pin-up pose in an undated photo. **TOP:** Monroe poses while filming "The Seven Year Itch" in New York.