

Newsmaker: Lauren Bacall



Earlier this month, Lauren Bacall got “a man at last.” Specifically, she got an Oscar statuette as the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented her with an honorary lifetime achievement award.

Bacall won two Tony Awards as Best Leading Actress in a Musical; one for *Applause*, 1970, and one for *Woman of the Year*, 1981. She won the Golden Globe Cecil B. DeMille Award in 1993, and received the Kennedy Center Honors in 1997. For her role as Hannah Morgan in *The Mirror Has Two Faces*, Bacall won a Golden Globe Award and a Screen Actors Guild Award – both for Best Actress in a Supporting Role. *The Mirror Has Two Faces* also earned Bacall an Academy Award nomination, but she never took home the Oscar – until now.

Bacall was born Betty Joan Perske in New York in September 1924. She was the only child of Jewish immigrants, Natalie Weinstein-Bacal and William Perske. Bacall’s parents divorced when she was only 5, and she took her mother’s last name (which at some point was legally changed to Bacall).

Bacall made her acting debut as Betty Bacall at age 17. Famed director Howard Hawks changed her name to Lauren when he took charge of her career shortly thereafter. And it is as Lauren Bacall that the camera fell in love with her.

Bacall’s entry into show business came in 1943 when Hawks’ wife saw her image on the cover of the *Harper’s Bazaar* magazine. Hawks cast Bacall in *To Have and Have Not* opposite Humphrey Bogart. For his part, Bogart was more than twice Bacall’s age and had, in the two years prior, starred the classic films *The Maltese Falcon* and *Casablanca*.

Bogart, then-married to his third wife, soon developed an interest in Bacall – leading to one of Hollywood’s most famous romantic pairings. They were married in May 1945, and had two children, Stephen and Leslie. Bogart and Bacall remained together until his death from throat cancer in January 1957. Thereafter, in 1961, Bacall married Jason Robards; that marriage lasted until 1968, and produced one son, Sam.

Of course, the pairing with Bogart also led to several films. In addition, Bacall starred in the comedy *How to Marry a Millionaire* with Marilyn Monroe and Betty Grable, starred in numerous other films, including two with John Wayne and *Sex and the Single Girl* with Henry Fonda and Tony Curtis, and took to the stage on Broadway.

Outside the realm of acting, Bacall wrote two autobiographies. The first, *By Myself*, was published in 1978. It won the 1980 National Book Award for Best Non-Fiction Book. The book was republished with a new chapter in 2005. In between, *Now* was published in 1994.

Bacall received her lifetime achievement award at the first-ever Governors Awards event on November 14th. The event was filmed, and excerpts will be shown during the annual presentation of the Academy Awards on March 7th.