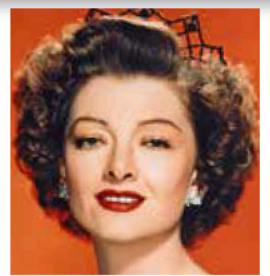


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MYRNA LOY

Her Amazing UNTOLD STORY

THE BELOVED ACTRESS ENJOYED GREAT SUCCESS —
AND INSISTED ON DOING THINGS HER WAY

Myrna Loy, best known as Nora Charles — the better half of detective Nick Charles in the *Thin Man* movies — enchanted audiences with her sly wit, cool sophistication and elegant style. Adoring fans called her “the perfect wife” and started “Men-Must-Marry Myrna” clubs. William Powell, her *Thin Man* co-star, once quipped, “The smartest thing I ever did was marry Myrna Loy on screen.”

Behind the scenes, however, Myrna hardly fit the mold of domestic goddess. Divorced four times and outspoken on issues of injustice, she did things her way. “She was the rare star who was not full of herself. She truly cared about other people and the state of the world,” says Emily W. Leider, author of *Myrna Loy: The Only Good Girl in Hollywood*.

Trained as a dancer, Myrna cut her teeth as a chorus girl and begrudgingly played vamps in several Warner Bros. films before landing the part of Nora. She went on to star in six *Thin Man* movies, plus eight more films with her favorite fictional hubby, William Powell. “He was a brilliant actor, a delightful companion, a great friend and, above all, a true gentleman,” she gushed.

The same could not be said of all her co-stars. “God knows, I’ve fended off my share of amorous men. I sent Clark Gable flying off my back porch into the bushes one night!” Myrna recalled. “Spencer Tracy

chased me for years, then sulked adorably when I married someone else.” That “someone else” was Arthur Hornblow Jr., a successful producer of screwball comedies and noir films. The marriage fizzled, but Myrna considered him the love of her life with the caveat, “He just about wrecked my life, too.” Five days post-divorce, Myrna married John D. Hertz, founder of Hertz Rent-A-Car and a violent brute. She left him in 1944, citing mental cruelty.

AN INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

Rather than dwell on heartbreak, Myrna joined the WWII relief effort and volunteered with the Red Cross. She was a vocal critic of Nazism, and her films were banned in Germany, which suited her fine. “Why should I be entertaining the Third Reich?” she demanded. In 1946, Myrna married producer-screenwriter Gene Markey and said, “He could make a scrub-woman think she was a queen.” They split in 1950. She later fell for Howland H. Sergeant, U.S. assistant secretary of state for public affairs, at a Unesco conference and became his missus. When they called it quits, she gave up on matrimony for good.

Reflecting on her attempts at conjugal bliss, Hollywood’s “perfect wife” put it this way: “In those days, we still had this thing that we had to get married. Not that I didn’t love each of the men I married, but I might not have felt the need to make it official.”

—Hilary Hattenbach, with reporting by Katie Bruno





MYRNA'S MANY ROLES



Myrna and her *Thin Man* co-star William Powell "were on the same wavelength," says biographer Emily W. Leider. "They admired one another... and had magical chemistry."

Although it was rumored that Myrna had an affair with Spencer Tracy, her co-star in 1935's *Whipsaw*, she denied it in her 1987 memoir, *Being and Becoming*.



She played the wife of returning serviceman Fredric March in 1946's *The Best Years of Our Lives*.

"Arthur Hornblow was the one she most respected and learned most from," Leider says of Myrna's first husband. The couple wed in 1936 and split six years later.



Although she never won an Oscar, the Hollywood legend received a Kennedy Center Honor in 1988.