



Hollywood: Her Story January 2023 ENewsletter In Memoriam

Each year during the Academy Awards, a montage of photos is shown of those who passed away since the previous Oscar ceremony. Two of those photos in 2023 will mourn Angela Lansbury and Louise Fletcher. We honor them both in this month's newsletter.



Angela Lansbury's film, stage and television career spanned eight decades. Born in 1925, she spent her early years in England. She was drawn to acting and the world of make-believe after her father died when she was nine years old. She and her family came to the U.S. in 1940 to escape the London Blitz. Making her screen debut at the age of 18, she was nominated for a Best Supporting Actress Academy Award for her role in *Gaslight*. A second nomination occurred for her work in the 1945 movie *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. What has been described as her best work occurred in the 1962 movie *The Manchurian Candidate*, for which she earned her third Best Supporting Actress nomination.



Saying she was an actress who could sing, Lansbury won praise for the title role of *Mame* on Broadway in 1966, for which she won her first Tony Award. Her sixth Tony came for *Blithe Spirit* in 2009, more than forty years later. In 1984, she began starring in the television show *Murder, She Wrote* which was a hit and ran for twelve seasons. In what was then unheard of, she played a leading lady who was in her sixties. She then won new fans with her performance as the voice of Mrs. Potts, the teapot, in the 1991 film *Beauty and the Beast*. Lansbury was nominated for many Primetime Emmy Awards and a Grammy Award. In 2014, Lansbury was presented with an Honorary Academy Award recognizing her career longevity and substance: "To Angela Lansbury, an entertainment icon who has created some of cinema's most memorable characters, inspiring generations of actors."



Louise Fletcher was born in Alabama in 1934 to deaf parents. She graduated from the University of North Carolina with a degree in drama and moved to Los Angeles where she soon was working regularly in television and film. After marrying producer Jerry Bick and having two sons, Fletcher took an 11-year hiatus from acting to raise them.

Fletcher had a sixty-year career in the movies and in television. Her early television roles, in the late 1950s, were in Westerns including *Lawman* and *Maverick*. She said, "I was 5 feet 10 inches tall, and no television producer thought a tall woman could be sexually attractive to anybody. I was able to get jobs on Westerns because the actors were even taller than I was."

When cast to play her most famous role of Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Fletcher based her character on the unfavorable manner in which she had seen white people treat black people in Alabama while she was growing up. It is no surprise that when she won the 1976 Academy Award for Best Actress for that role, she finished with a unique (unspoken) touch in American Sign Language to thank her parents: "For my mother and my father, I want to say thank you for teaching me to have a dream. You are seeing my dream come true." In addition to her Oscar, she won the BAFTA and Golden Globe award for her role, joining Liza Minnelli and Audrey Hepburn who had also



won all those honors for a single performance.

Women in front of and behind the camera make the movies that we all welcome into our hearts and homes. Women across all the areas of moviemaking from actress to animator, editor to stuntwoman, costume designer to screenwriter, producer to director have contributed to the success of the movie industry since its founding in the 1890s. Help us celebrate these women who are written into movie history in *Hollywood: Her Story*.

Jill S. Tietjen and Barbara Bridges

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