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â??Singinâ?? in the Rainâ?? was first stop in Debbie Reynoldsâ?? unsinkable career

Description

Posted by Larry GleesonBy Sharon Eberson / Pittsburgh Post-GazetteUnfolding memories of all that Debbie Reynolds brought to the stage, screen and celebrity fascination of our lives would read like a chronicle of Hollywood history, starting in 1952. Thatâ??s when a 19-year-old went toe-to-toe with Gene Kelly and Donald Oâ??Connor in â??Singinâ?? in the Rain,â?• the American Film Instituteâ??s No. 1 movie musical of all time.Ms. Reynolds died Wednesday at 84, just one day after the death of her daughter, actress, writer and mental health activist Carrie Fisher.

Film star Debbie Reynolds, who collected movie memorabilia for more than 30 years, opened the Hollywood Motion Picture Museum in Pigeon Forge, Tenn., in 2005. (via Business Wire)

In recent years, Ms. Reynolds appeared on screen mostly as matriarchs, with Albert Brooks in the title role of the 1996 film â??Motherâ?• and as Debra Messingâ??s mom in the sitcom â??Will & Grace.â?• She also provided the voice of the nurturing spider in â??Charlotteâ??s Web,â?• Nana Possible in the animated TV series â??Kim Possibleâ?• and Lulu Pickles for â??Rugrats.â?•

The 1973 Broadway musical â??Ireneâ?• earned her a leading actress Tony nomination and her lone Academy Award nomination was for her favorite role â?? â??The Unsinkable Molly Brown.â?• Earlier this year, Ms. Reynolds was honored with the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award at the Oscars ceremony.

Ms. Reynolds gave us many more memories in seven decades as a public figure, but if she had done nothing else in her career, she would still be remembered simply for being in â??Singinâ?? in the Rain,â?• Mark Olsen wrote in his Los Angeles Times appreciation.

The actress had four credited movie roles when she was cast opposite Mr. Kelly, a Pittsburgh native, and Mr. Oâ??Connor.

â??She noted at the British Film Institute in 2011: â??I wasnâ??t sexy, I wasnâ??t beautiful, I wasnâ??t cute and I couldnâ??t dance. Why would they take me?â??

â??One only has to see her pop out of a cake to dance and sing to â??All I Do Is Dream of Youâ?? to answer the question. Her exuberance, the sheer attack with which she approached the part, made her undeniable,â?• Mr. Olsen writes.

â??You know, I was so dumb,â?• she said to the American Film Institute in 2012, â??that I didnâ??t feel you could fail.â?•

Mr. Kellyâ??s widow, Patricia Ward Kelly, on Thursday told BBC Radio that Ms. Reynolds, Mr. Kelly and Mr. Oâ??Connor â??are like comets that flash through the air once in a lifetime. And we are ever so grateful.â?•

On Facebook, Mrs. Kelly debunked what she called â??a tall taleâ?• about Ms. Reynolds as a young dancer. She quoted NPRâ??s Neda Ulaby as saying Ms. Reynolds â??had studied gymnastics, but for the movie, she practiced tap dancing for up to 14 hours at a time.â?•

Mrs. Kelly said production records are very clear on the subject. For example, â??on April 25, 1951, the report indicates that Gene arrived on set at 10 a.m., had one meal and departed at 5:15 p.m. â??Debbie Reynolds same.â??â?• She also notes, as Ms. Reynolds has said, that her rehearsal time was three months, â??which says a lot about Debbie and the remarkable assistants who taught her to dance.â?•

There has been much speculation about the cause of the seemingly unsinkable Ms. Reynoldsâ?? death. The entertainer suffered two strokes in 2015 but seemed to make a full recovery.

No cause of death has been disclosed for mother or daughter, but some are blaming Ms. Reynoldsâ?? passing on broken heart syndrome, known medically as stress-induced cardiomyopathy. In the scant space between her daughterâ??s death and her own, Ms. Reynolds told her son, Todd Fisher, â??I want to be with Carrie,â??â?• according to the Associated Press.

â??A â??broken heartâ?? really is an event where the heart ceases to function normally and is prone to heart rhythm abnormalities,â?• Dr. Mark Creager, past president of the American Heart Association, told the AP. â??That term is used to explain a very real phenomenon that does occur in patients who have been exposed to sudden emotional stress or extremely devastating circumstances.â?•

The documentary â??Bright Lights: Starring Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynoldsâ?• will premiere at 8 p.m. Jan. 7 on HBO. The film chronicling the sometimes rocky mother-daughter relationship was shown at the Cannes Film Festival in May and was originally set to air on HBO in March.

The Hollywood Reporter called it â??a tender tribute to two iconic women whose Hollywood history spans from â??Singinâ?? in the Rainâ?? through â??Star Warsâ?? and whose intimate connection is no less singular.â?•

In the meantime, viewings of â??The Unsinkable Molly Brownâ?• and â??Singinâ?? in the Rainâ?• would seem to be in order.

(Source:post-gazette.com)

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