

CARY GRANT

Born Archibald Alexander Leach on January 18, 1904, in Bristol, Gloucestershire, England, to Elias J. Leach, a clothes presser, and Elsie (née) Kingdom. Grant grew up in a lower middle-class environment under depressing circumstances. As the only surviving son of his parents, he was the focus of much criticism, and his mother continuously grieved for her firstborn son, who had died in 1899. His father was an alcoholic who had numerous affairs with other women; with Mabel Bass he had a son, Eric Leslie Leach. Grant was never told about the existence of his half brother, nor was he told the truth when (around 1914) his mother was committed to a mental health sanitarium (he did not see her again until his late 20s). Grant's education included the Bishop Road boys' school in Bristol, and he received a scholarship in 1915 to attend the Fairfield secondary school in Somerset.

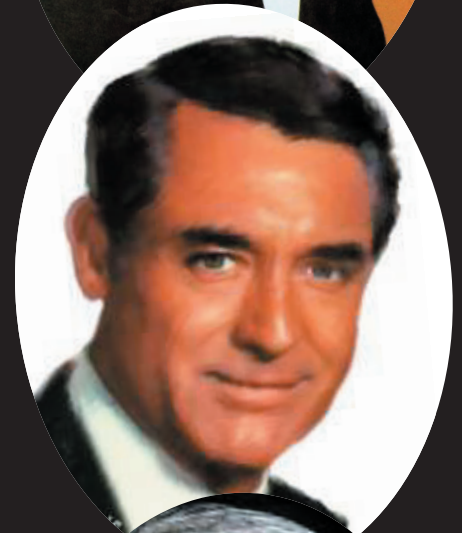
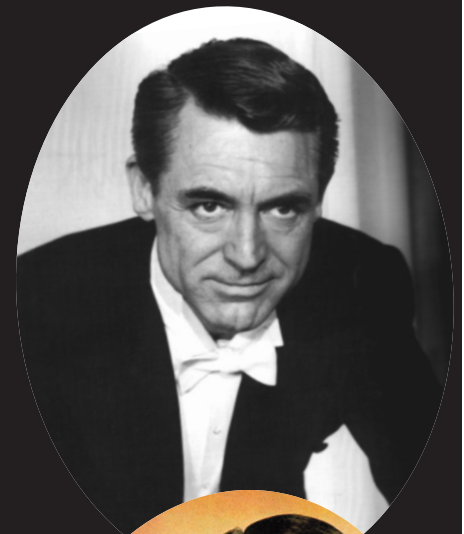
At the age of 14, Grant forged his father's signature on a letter of permission to join a traveling acrobatic troupe, led by Bob Pender. In 1920, Grant traveled for the first time to the United States, performing *Good Times* at the Globe Theatre in New York City with a select group of boys from the Pender troupe. After a 456-performance run at the Globe, the group teamed up with the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, touring for several months. When the troupe disbanded, Grant chose to stay in America, working variously as a stilt walker and a vaudeville performer throughout the U.S., and later in parts of Canada. He returned to England in 1925, touring and performing in a small regional repertory theatre.

Grant moved to New York again in 1927, where he appeared on Broadway in numerous musicals and plays while trying to break into films. Paramount Studios finally gave him a chance, although his screen debut, *Singapore Sue* (1931), was uncredited. In 1932, newly christened by the studio as Cary Grant, he made his feature debut in *This is the Night*, followed by a string of mediocre films. He teamed up with Mae West, at her request, for the seductive comedy *She Done Him Wrong* (1933), which launched a prolific, if unremarkable, film career until 1937. At that time, his contract with the studio expired, and he was free to choose his own projects.

With his dashing good looks, a distinctively melodious way of speaking, and deadpan delivery, Grant's specialty was the slapstick romantic comedy, although he succeeded just as well in other genres, including suspense and action-adventure, as well as straight romance. *The Awful Truth* (1937), with Irene Dunne and Ralph Bellamy, confirmed Grant's command as a comical leading man. From that point on, he starred in a remarkable number of well-crafted films, featuring Hollywood's most talented directors, actors and writers. In 1938, he costarred with Katharine Hepburn in two back-to-back romantic comedies, *Bringing Up Baby*, directed by Howard Hawks; and *Holiday*, directed by George Cukor. The next year he starred in Hawks' romantic adventure, *Only Angels Have Wings*, featuring Jean Arthur and Rita Hayworth. He worked with Hawks yet again on *His Girl Friday* (1940), a film in which Grant's character must win back his estranged ex-wife, played by Rosalind Russell.

In a similar role, Grant reteamed with Hepburn in 1940 for Cukor's star-studded Oscar-winning comedy *The Philadelphia Story*. The film also featured James Stewart (who won a Best Actor Oscar) and Ruth Hussey (nominated as Best Supporting Actress). Hepburn picked up a Best Actress nomination for her role in the film that was originally a Broadway play; written especially for her by Donald Ogden Stewart, who also won an Oscar for his screenplay.

Suspicion (1941), costarring Joan Fontaine, was the first of four films that Grant made with Alfred Hitchcock, a director whose mastery in creating uniquely





suspenseful plots and witty dialogue was perfectly suited to Grant's poised and intelligent demeanor. Over the next 18 years, the actor and director collaborated on *Notorious* (1946) with Ingrid Bergman, *To Catch a Thief* (1955) with Grace Kelly, and *North by Northwest* (1959). Costarring Eva Marie Saint, James Mason, and Martin Landau, *North by Northwest* featured some of the raciest dialogue of the era, with Grant uttering lines such as: "the moment I meet an attractive woman, I have to start pretending I have no desire to make love to her." It has become one of the most celebrated films in history, best known for two memorable sequences in which Grant's character, Thornhill, is chased in broad daylight across an ominously deserted cornfield by a low-flying crop duster; and the film's harrowing climax on Mount Rushmore.

Grant's other popular though lightweight films included *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944); *The Bishop's Wife* (1947); *Hawk's, I Was a Male Warbride* (1949)—in which Grant reinforces his slapstick routine as a French soldier in drag; and the tender hearted romance *An Affair to Remember* (1957), costarring Deborah Kerr.

As a point of interest, author Ian Fleming modeled the now iconic character of James Bond after the then-equally-iconic Grant. In fact, Grant was originally offered the role in the first Bond film, 1962's *Dr. No*, but turned it down. He then took a Bond-stylized role in *Charade* (1963), costarring Audrey Hepburn and Walter Matthau.

In 1969, Grant received an honorary Academy Award, which was presented to him by Frank Sinatra. He also received the Kennedy Center Honors Lifetime Achievement Award in 1981.

Grant was married and divorced numerous times in his life. He married Virginia Cherrill in 1933, and they divorced in 1935. From 1942-1945, he was married to Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton; and from 1949-1959, he was married to actress Betsy Drake. During this period, Grant suffered a personal crisis and, for a two-year period, he underwent controversial psychiatric treatment with LSD, a psychedelic hallucinogenic drug. His marriage to actress Dyan Cannon, in July 1965, lasted three years, and they had one child together, Jennifer Grant, born February 26, 1966. In 1981, Grant married Barbara Harris. Grant and Harris were together until he died of a stroke on November 29, 1986, Grant died in Davenport, Iowa.

Most biographers of Grant assert that he was conflicted about his sexual orientation and spent most of his life in denial of his bisexuality. As evidence, they cite Grant's recurring relationship with actor Randolph Scott, with whom he shared a house from 1933 on, when both were struggling actors, and later, between Grant's marriages.

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1932 *Sinners in the Sun*
1932 *Hot Saturday*
1932 *This Is The Night*
1932 *Devil and the Deep*
1932 *Blonde Venus*
1932 *Madame Butterfly*
1932 *Merrily We Go to Hell*
1933 *Woman Accused*
1933 *Alice in Wonderland*
1933 *The Eagle & The Hawk*
1933 *I'm No Angel*
1933 *She Done Him Wrong*
1933 *Gambling Ship*
1934 *Born to Be Bad*
1934 *Kiss and Make Up*
1934 *Thirty Day Princess*
1934 *Ladies Should Listen*
1935 *Wings in the Dark*
1935 *Enter Madame*

1935 *The Last Outpost*
1936 *Wedding Present*
1936 *Suzy*
1936 *Sylvia Scarlett*
1936 *Big Brown Eyes*
1936 *Amazing Quest of Ernest Bliss*
1937 *When You're in Love*
1937 *The Awful Truth*
1937 *Toast of New York*
1937 *Topper*
1938 *Holiday*
1938 *Bringing Up Baby*
1939 *Only Angels Have Wings*
1939 *Gunga Din*
1939 *In Name Only*
1940 *The Philadelphia Story*
1940 *His Girl Friday*
1940 *My Favorite Wife*

1940 *The Howards of Virginia*
1941 *Penny Serenade*
1941 *Suspicion*
1942 *The Talk of the Town*
1942 *Once Upon a Honeymoon*
1943 *Destination Tokyo*
1943 *Mr. Lucky*
1944 *None But The Lonely Heart*
1944 *Once Upon a Time*
1944 *Arsenic and Old Lace*
1944 *Road to Victory*
1946 *Notorious*
1946 *Night and Day*
1947 *The Bishop's Wife*
1947 *Bachelor & Bobby-Soxer*
1948 *Every Girl Should Be Married*
1948 *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House*
1949 *I Was a Male Warbride*