

Lauren Bacall

Born Betty Joan Perske in The Bronx on September 16, 1924, Bacall was the only child of Natalie Weinstein-Bacal, a secretary, and William Perske, who worked in sales. Her parents divorced when she was five, and Bacall no longer saw her father.

In the early 1940s, Bacall took acting lessons at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and worked as a fashion model. The wife of Howard Hawks saw her on the March 1943 cover of Harper's Bazaar and arranged for a screen test. She then helped groom Bacall in matters of dress and deportment. Nancy Hawks coached Bacall to lower her voice, which produced Bacall's trademark husky delivery.

Bacall appeared in more than 50 films over her long career, starting with *To Have and Have Not* (1944), filmed when she was still 19. Some of her most acclaimed performances were in *The Big Sleep* (1946); *Key Largo* (1948); *Young Man with a Horn* (1950), with Kirk Douglas; the musical *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (1951); and the melodrama *Written on the Wind* (1956). Later appearances include *Murder on the Orient Express* (1974), *Ready to Wear* (1994) and *The Mirror Has Two Faces* (1996), for which she was nominated for an Academy Award. In 2009, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented Bacall with an Honorary Academy Award.

Bacall returned to Broadway to star in *Goodbye, Charlie* (1959) and *Cactus Flower* (1965), as well as many other productions. She won Tony Awards for Best Leading Actress in a Musical for both *Applause* (1970) and *Woman of the Year* (1981).

Bacall married Humphrey Bogart on May 21, 1945, when Bacall was 20 and Bogart was 45. They had two children (son Stephen and daughter Leslie) and remained married until Bogart's death from esophageal cancer in 1957. Bacall was married to actor Jason Robards, Jr. from 1961 to 1969 and with him had a son, Sam, also an actor. Bacall's two autobiographies are *Lauren Bacall By Myself* (1978) and *Now* (1994).

Along with other Hollywood figures, Bacall was a firm opponent of McCarthyism. With Bogart, she declared, "We're about as much in favor of Communism as J. Edgar Hoover." She campaigned for Democratic candidate Adlai Stevenson in the 1952 Presidential election and for Robert Kennedy in his 1964 run for Senate. Bacall is a staunch liberal Democrat and lives in New York City.