

Deenie Nast Biography

Few performers of stage or screen can claim as diverse a legacy as Deenie Nast. She's shone as a star in film, theatre, television, radio, and vaudeville for more than 9 decades and shows no sign of slowing down. The world was first introduced to her incorrigible talent and personality when, at the age of three she stole the vaudeville stage from the headlining dwarf. The unplanned interruption was quickly incorporated into the act and Deenie became the main attraction of what came to be billed as "Little Deenie the Pipsqueak!" Deenie learned quickly using her strong personality and unique voice to create her own vaudeville routines at a very early age until she was eventually controlling her own career by the age of 17.

From that shining beginning she has been performing almost non-stop. Her international vaudeville circuit tours eventually landed her roles on Broadway and in London's West End. Some of the many plays and musicals she's starred in include "Angel Food Cake," "Cigarette Girl," "Never Enough," "Shangri-La La," "Mr. Medicine, Mrs. Manners," "Man Overboard!," "Goodnight Havana," "110%," and Neil Simon's "Shanks For The Memories." Working with such directors as Bob Fosse, Elia Kazan and Harold Prince Ms. Nast originated stage roles in "Arms to Hold You With," Irving Berlin's "Me and You Makes Three," Stephen Sondheim's "Vamp and Vampires," Andrew Lloyd Weber's "Imelda," and Elton John and Tim Rice's "Agrippina."

Her positive notices on Broadway gained attention across the country. Hollywood studios, recognizing Ms. Nast's qualities, were soon harnessing her star power in motion pictures. Starting with United Artists, she worked under various studio contracts, where she shared the screen with such luminaries as Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, W.C. Fields, Joan Crawford, Elvis Presley, Bruce Dern, and Tom Selleck. The list of directors she worked with reads like a history of motion pictures starting with F. W. Murnau, D.W. Griffiths, Cecil B. DeMille, Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock, Billy Wilder, Sam Fuller, Roger Corman, Brian DePalma, and many more in such films as "The Undeveloped Heart," "Hey You... You'll Do," "Hag You Very Much," "The Slanted Eye" "You Forsake Me," Elvis Presley's "Whoopie Cat" and "The Lion's Roar" for which she won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress in 1943.

While the press has often focused on Ms. Nast's personal affairs and behavior she has never let that keep her from turning in some of the most captivating performances of the century. "The Lion's Roar" and her wildly popular series of biker subculture films of the 60's and 70's are just some of the projects that have been acknowledged commercial successes in part due to the media attention Ms. Nast garnered those projects. An innovator in promotion, Ms. Nast became a master at turning what some would call undesirable tabloid attention into a box-office draw.

Perhaps a less public aspect of Deenie Nast has been her humanitarian efforts. Ms. Nast has used her own difficulties to help others. She started work in illiteracy during one of her own "dark periods" and has encouraged many troubled children to become future Broadway and film stars at "Deenie Nast's Summer Camp for Sassy but Gifted Delinquents" where she makes inspirational appearances semi-annually.

Starting in the late 1960's Ms. Nast became known to an entirely different generation of Americans through such popular television programs as "Take That Back!" "The Deenie Nast Show," "What's Shakin'?", "Toni's Place" (later called "Deenie's Place"), "Mrs. Vinegar, Crime Solver," and Hallmark Hall of Fame's "When She Finally Fell Down: The Catherine Steemer Story" for which she was awarded an Emmy for Best Performance by an actress in a drama in 1985.

From her powerhouse start on the vaudeville stage to her current cabaret tour and throughout Ms. Nast's long full life she has been a consummate performer, rarely taking a break from performing and public appearances. She remains an inimitable talent and incorrigible spirit that never stops giving to those she loves the most – her audience.