

THE

Nick Zegarac's

Hollywood

ART



When Knighthood Was In Flower

The extraordinary life of
Sir Rex Harrison

by *Nick Zegarac*

“In many ways he did live for the moments when he could show himself through a part... and he always seems to me to be more alive in those moments than I knew him to be off stage.”

– Carey Harrison

This statement by Rex Harrison’s younger son is most telling to the outsider admiring the actor’s formidable body of work. For in Harrison there is much more than the lion’s share of being deviously deceptive; an almost chameleon-like ability to blend, blur and even obliterate the line between man and myth.

When he is on the screen in **My Fair Lady** he is Professor Henry Higgins; in **Cleopatra** – Julius Caesar.

We believe him implicitly when he sells us a bill of goods that he can talk to the animals in **Doctor Doolittle** by warbling inaudible grunts and moans to a cavalcade of real and imagined beasts.

Like so many of the characters he played both on stage and in films, Rex Harrison lived a life of extremes. In his youth his outward persona tottered between that of a wellborn cultured jetsetter who, in reality, had little clout or money to his name. In retrospect, as his stature as an actor grew so too did his personal life become as volatile and varied as the roles he played.

Married six times, yet desperately claiming the constant love of one woman, Harrison was an electrifying mass of contradictions. Although he created a myriad of indelible and complex characters, arguably the most compelling part he ever played was his own life.



NO ORDINARY MAN

– the journey begins...

Reginald Carey Harrison was born to privilege in Heighton, England on March 5, 1908. In truth, there was very little about his youth that should foreshadow greatness. Reginald's father, William was a flirtatious and handsome sport who preferred the social graces to a steadfast work ethic. If William was a lax blueprint for Reginald's upbringing, his mother, Edith more than amply balanced her husband's wayward nature with a rigid set of finite values that she instilled in her son and Reginald's two older sisters, Sylvia and Marjorie.

Still, with young Reginald's health often teetering between virulent bouts of influenza and phenomena, Edith was a doting and loving matriarch whose pampering led to Reginald becoming a confirmed mama's boy. After a particularly nasty plague of measles, the recovering Reginald was taken to the local live theater to get his mind off his woes. Basking in the afterglow of footlights and thundering applause, Reginald returned home to begin practicing his own bows in his living room. The die had been cast. Reginald Harrison was going to become an actor.

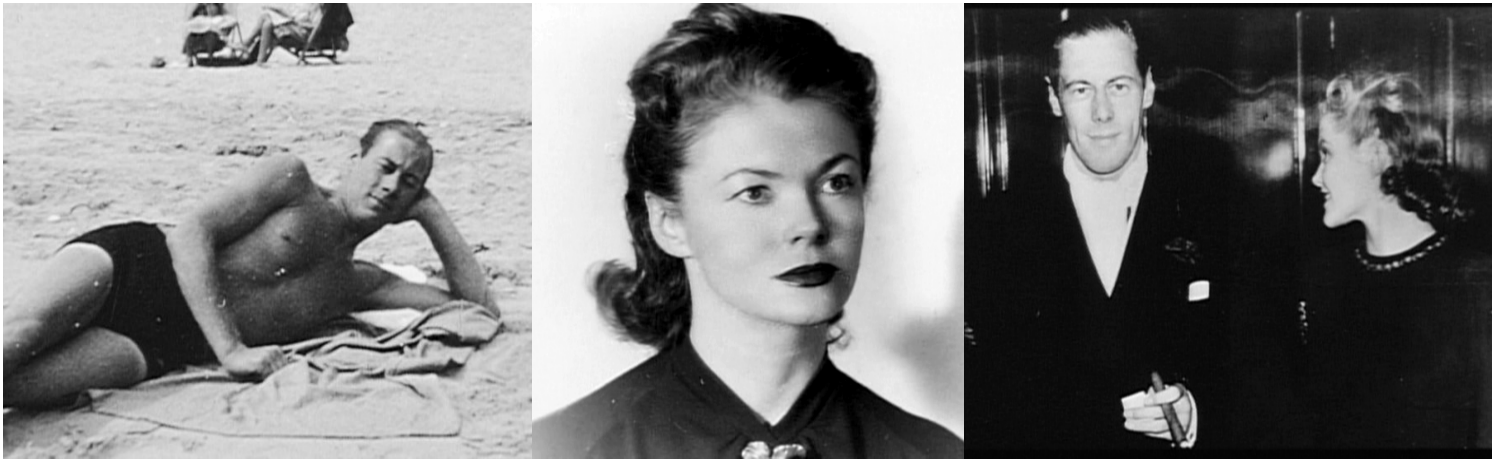
At the age of ten, Reginald traded his conventional upper English Christian first name for 'Rex' – with its ancient connotations of kingly inheritance and infinitely more manageable placement on a theater marquee. On November 11, 1918, Rex made things more official with a move to Sefton Park and enrollment in their dramatic society. Though paved with good intentions, this road was hardly smooth or glamorous.

At 14, Rex debuted in the society's production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and very quickly came to the realization that there was quite a bit more to acting than taking bows. To be truly great he would have to succumb to expert tutelage. For Rex, the very idea seemed distasteful. **"(He was) very rebellious,"** son Noel has said of his father, **"He would never conform to what people expected of him to do."** Still, it was a means to an end and so, the pupil began his exercises.

(Previous page: an early autographed publicity still, after Rex had already become a British matinee idol, but not an American star. Middle: Rex in his most famous role, as Prof. Henry Higgins on stage with Julie Andrews as Eliza – *My Fair Lady*. Bottom: with Jack Warner and the screen's Eliza, Audrey Hepburn at the post Oscar party.)

This page, top: posing in one of literally hundreds of stills for the film version of *My Fair Lady*. Middle: Rex as a child at Brighton Beach with sisters, Sylvia and Marjorie. Middle: Rex, age 12 with his parents. Bottom: Rex with a fellow school mate while attending middle school in Liverpool. Rex's aptitude for learning was matched by his contempt for authority.)





(Top left: by the time Rex casually posed for this photo on the beach he had already acquired the moniker 'Sexy Remy'. Middle: Rex's first wife, Noel Marjorie Collette Thomas. From an affluent family, Collette's father was vehemently opposed to her choice of squire. He was even less enthused with the couple announced that they were going to get married. Right: Rex and Collette – an amiable couple about town. Her money made Rex popular. With marriage and the birth of a son, Collette longed for a stable family man. Rex had other ambitions.)

In 1925, Rex was accepted, under theater director William Armstrong, into the Liverpool Repertory Company as their 'actor in residence.' But the 17 year old was confined mostly to odd jobs backstage. A bright spot for Rex materialized in a cameo for the company in **Thirty Minutes in A Street**. Despite the briefness of his appearance, Rex managed to catch the eye of a few critics who thought him a worth addition to the cast.

Unfortunately, 'Liverpool' did not pay the bills. Even so, Rex had already managed to adapt his stage persona to life; a randy rake about town, the sort of good time Charlie who caroused a lot with other people's money and squired the ladies with effortless charm and sophistication. For Rex, these were the happiest of times. His exploits, however, did come with minor fallout; they earned the actor the moniker 'Sexy Remy.'

By 1927, Rex Harrison had managed a minor coup; he had become a prolific commodity – a man of envy to most others his own age and a real charmer with the fairer sex. Yet, nothing short of perfecting his craft would satisfy the egotistical actor. And so, in September of that year, Rex moved to London where he began a 12 week tour in the play, **Charlie's Aunt**. His part garnered rave reviews in the press.

Rex followed up this performance for the Cardiff Repertory Company with an inconsequential bit in **The Ninth Moon** – a terrific flop. For the next six years, Rex toured with Cardiff all over the English countryside – appearing in a different play nearly every month and a different town every week. He created dozens of indelible characters and became a fine actor in the process.

In 1933, Rex fell for a glamorous model; Noel Marjorie Colette Thomas. This immediate attraction came with obvious perks. First, Colette (as she was known to friends) came from a well connected and affluent family. As a social climber, Rex aspired to this sort of snobbery that Colette had been born into. She also had spirit and temperament that were well matched to Rex's ego. But most important of all, Colette knew the sort of people that could help advance Rex's career.

Colette's father was no fool. He adamantly disapproved of his daughter's match. Despite strenuous objections, Colette became Mrs. Rex Harrison in January 1934. It was the beginning of a great love affair that would gradually dissolve into a troubled marriage.



BED OF ROSES/BED OF THORNS

"Tomorrow is a thief of pleasure." – Rex Harrison

During their formative married years, Rex continued to find steady work as an actor on the stage. He had small roles in **The Great Game** (1930), **School for Scandal** (1930) and **Leave It To Blanche** (1934). If, at least artistically, the parts were increasing in stature, Rex's pay for the work remained meager at best – a bone of contention that often strained his home life with Colette who had been accustomed to more than the actor's current salary could provide.

Despite these tensions, Rex and Colette had a son, Noel on January 29, 1935. The following year, Rex's professional prospects began to improve when at the age of 28 he was cast to great effect in Terrance Ratigan's **French Without Tears** (1936). The play would go on to become the most widely acclaimed production in the history of London's prestigious West End.

At roughly this same juncture the movies decided to capitalize on Rex's popularity. In Britain he made his filmic debut with **Storm in A Teacup** (1937), opposite a young Vivien Leigh. Rex's reviews were solid. Based on his performance as Frank Burdon – a small time reporter who is put in charge of a Scottish newspaper – director King Vidor offered Rex a major role in MGM's **The Citadel** (1938) – costarring Robert Donat. At long last, Hollywood would hear of the young actor that Britain had already hailed as their 'most popular.' Sadly, **The Citadel** was not the smash hit that either Vidor or Rex had hoped for.

With the advent of World War II looming on the horizon, Rex returned to England to enlist in the Armed Forces. He was rejected from active service due to poor eyesight. Years before, a bout of measles had nearly blinded him in his left eye. Disillusioned and disappointed, Rex opted to return to the London stage rather than accept a contract from MGM. But on September 3, 1939, the fear of regular bombings from Hitler's army officially closed most of London's film and theatrical establishments. Rex was out of a job.

During the early part of the war years, Rex toured the countryside in plays as he had done in his youth for the Cardiff Company. If, on the surface, this move appeared to be a retreat or two steps back in the wrong direction there was one great difference this time around. Rex was a seasoned professional, embraced by the public and critics alike.

(Top and middle: two publicity stills from Rex's burgeoning British film career pre-WWII. Middle: in a still from 'French Without Tears.' Bottom: Colette with their son, Noel, happy mother and child – a scene that was soon to change.)





His wife, Colette now worked for the Red Cross. Her separation from Rex afforded him the lifestyle of a bachelor – enough time for Rex to become smitten with 25 year old Lily Palmer; a multifaceted novelist, painter and stage performer. The two began a torrid affair that continued as Rex separated from Colette in the spring of 1940. Imagining his new romance at the crux of historically great theatrical husband and wife couplings like Lunt and Fontanne, Rex and Lily set up house in Chelsea.

Rex appeared as Adolphus Cusins in the filmic version of George Bernard Shaw's stage success, **Major Barbara** (1941) opposite gifted actress, Wendy Hiller, and for the first time in his career took astute direction from the 84 year old playwright. Though Shaw considered Rex's interpretation the definitive of his masterwork, the film was not a commercial success and so it was back to repertory work and meager salaries.



By now, these stalemates in his professional career were becoming too much to bear. Thorny and determined as ever to distinguish himself during the war years, Rex appealed his rejection into the Armed Services and was rewarded for his obstinate perseverance with an appointment to the RAF where his duties included guiding British planes safely back to their launching pads after aerial combat missions. During his tenure, Rex also decided to make an honest woman of Lily. The two were wed on January 25, 1943 and for two years thereafter, Rex and Lily enjoyed what appeared to be an ideal union. Their son, Carey Alfred was born on February 19, 1944, the same year Rex was honorably discharged from active service.



At war's end, Rex and Lily appeared together in **The Rake's Progress** (1945), a film that caught the eye of producer Darryl F. Zanuck, who offered Rex a seven year Fox studio contract at \$4,500 per week. The couple moved to Hollywood, renting a suite at the fashionable Beverly Hills Hotel.

(Top left: Rex with costar Wendy Hiller in Major Barbara. Hiller was considered one of Britain's premiere actresses by the time she appeared with Rex in this adaptation of Bernard Shaw's celebrated stage play. Middle: Rex, in costume, with George Bernard Shaw during a break on the set of Major Barbara. Rex, who never took direction well, took it with great humility from Shaw. Bottom: Lily Palmer's publicity still. She was a starlet who aspired to be a great actress. It never really happened, though that did not stop her from become the second Mrs. Rex Harrison.)



(Top left: a publicity still of Rex as the King of Siam. Center: confronting Anna on her first visit to the palace. She refuses to wait for an audience with the king. He does not remember his promise of providing her with her own accommodations adjacent the palace walls. Right: preparing for the royal dinner that will prove to foreign visiting dignitaries that the king is not a 'barbarian.' Costar, Irene Dunne as Anna looks on with growing admiration.

Right: three moments behind the scenes on the set of *The Ghost & Mrs. Muir*. Rex and costar Gene Tierney got along famously during shooting. Between Rex and director, Joseph Mankiewicz was quite another story. Rex knew his character inside and out and resented any 'suggestions' Mankiewicz made for possible 'improvements'.)



For his debut project, Rex was cast opposite Irene Dunne in **Anna and the King of Siam** (1946). Rex excelled as the aggressive, though loveable potentate, though initially he had had misgivings about the part – even going so far as to hire an acting coach to ease him into character. Never one to take direction well, Rex and his director, John Cromwell did not get on. In fact, on several occasions noted in the Fox memo archive, Cromwell urged Zanuck to reconsider and/or recast the part. To his credit, Zanuck quietly ignored these complaints, affording Rex his first major Hollywood success.



Anna and the King of Siam was a big hit with audiences. Rex's follow up for Fox was even more suited to his temperament; as the wily, gruff, yet romantic Daniel Gregg in Joseph L. Mankiewicz's **The Ghost and Mrs. Muir** (1947). In the film, Rex is a deceased sea captain who carries on a forty year platonic affair with a flesh and blood woman played by the sultry Gene Tierney. Unfortunately for Rex, old habits died hard. He constantly clashed with Mankiewicz over his performance, quietly cementing his reputation around the back lot and the rest of Hollywood as being a 'difficult actor.' Despite these backstage clashes, the film was another colossal smash, elevating his stature and importance in the filmmaking community.



Living high and mighty, Rex indulged his every whim off camera, beginning a rather sordid extramarital affair with Fox contract player, Carole Landis. But the Hollywood of his generation was not that same illustrious Babylon of decadence that it has become today. Under the rigid conservatism of The Catholic Legion of Decency and a rather autocratic studio system, actors were expected to maintain a relatively



(Above: having beard makeup reapplied daily for his role as Capt. Gregg. Middle top: Rex's first close up in *The Ghost & Mrs. Muir*, materializing from the dark. Right top: "What's to become of us, Daniel?" Mrs. Muir (Gene Tierney) asks. One of the most unusual and poignant melodramas ever filmed, *The Ghost & Mrs. Muir* was attempted as a made for TV melodrama/comedy. It bombed miserably. Middle bottom: Daniel bids Mrs. Muir goodnight and goodbye. Bottom right: Mrs. Muir strikes a bargain with her unwanted house guest, the ghost – not to haunt Gull Cottage or appear in a physical manifestation to her young daughter, played by Natalie Wood.)

Right top: actress Carol Landis was one of Darryl F. Zanuck's hopeful starlets on her way to becoming a big star when she began to spiral out of control with wild partying and erratic behavior. Middle: discovering Landis' body. Officially, the public blamed Rex's affair and break up with Landis as the cause for the suicide by overdose. Bottom: a telling pose in another Fox publicity still. Following the abysmal premiere of *Unfaithfully Yours*, Fox canceled Rex's studio contract.)

untarnished surface sheen and to behave properly at all times while working long hours, six out of seven days a week. To many, Rex's devil-may-care attitude in general and very public affair with Landis in particular seemed a glaring and spiteful tweak to these carved in stone edicts. Landis, however, was no stranger to bad press.

By the age of 28, Carole Landis had been a divorcee four times removed with several botched suicide attempts feathered in for the tabloid fodder. For studio chief, Darryl F. Zanuck, she was increasingly becoming a bad risk at the box office and her star had slowly begun to decline. To Rex however, Landis embodied the sort of free-wheeling excitement he sorely lacked at home. Hoping that their affair would eventually lead to marriage, Landis pursued the relationship with almost rabid fascination and long after Rex's lust had begun to cool toward her.

Meanwhile, 40 year old Rex began work at Fox on Preston Sturges' **Unfaithfully Yours** (1948) – a film about a philharmonic conductor who plots diabolical and blood-thirsty revenges for a wife he suspects of having an affair. Throughout the shoot, Rex was distracted by his turbulent relationship with Landis. Eventually, he openly admitted that he had no intension of marrying her and Landis – in a state of complete rage and





shock – made her final suicide attempt. She died of an overdose on July 4th, 1948 – at approximately the same time as **Unfaithfully Yours** hit theater screens. The net result for Rex was both a professional flop and a very public scandal.

As a result of the negative press, Fox canceled Rex’s contract. He retreated, though not in shame, with Lily to New York City for more than a decade’s worth of solid performing on the stage; beginning with a turn as Henry VIII in Maxwell Anderson’s **Anne of the Thousand Days** (1949). The play ran for 288 performances and earned Rex his first Tony Award. He followed this success with another; **Bell Book and Candle** in 1950, costarring Lily and to great acclaim. The couple next appeared as a pair of newlyweds in the classy film comedy, **The Four Poster** (1951).



But the strain of constantly being together had worn thin the last remnants of their eroding relationship. Lily retired from performing and Rex went on to make **The Constant Husband** (1954); ironically, a tale about a man with six wives. At approximately this same juncture, 46 year old Rex fell in love with the irrepressible and luminous Kay Kendall. At 26, Kendall was already an veteran of film work. A vivacious raconteur, the actress easily won Rex’s heart and the two became lovers. After 11 years of marriage, Rex and Lily separated.

HITTING THE HIGH NOTES

– the definitive Rex Harrison

“Exhilaration is that feeling you get just after a great idea hits you, and just before you realize what’s wrong with it.”

– Rex Harrison

To say that **My Fair Lady** came to Rex Harrison at a time when most actors of his generation might not have even hoped for as much is an understatement. Based on George Bernard Shaw’s **Pygmalion**, Frederick Lowe and Alan Jay Lerner’s musical about an English elocutionist’s growing affections for his cockney protégée was both a financial and an artistic blessing – the much needed shot in the arm that Rex required at precisely this point in his career.

Top: with Lily Palmer costarring in **The Four Poster**. Working on the film briefly brought the couple closer together. However, Rex had already begun to focus his affections on a new woman – Kay Kendall. Middle: at 26, Kendall was effervescent, charming and uncomplicated. Her affair with Rex was, by all accounts, ideal and fast developing into a life long commitment. Tragically, Kendall’s cancer diagnosis shattered their chances at any lasting happiness. Middle: Rex poses in the hat and suit coat he wore for the stage version of **My Fair Lady**. Bottom: Rex as Henry VIII for the stage version of **Anne of a Thousand Days** – Maxwell Anderson’s critique of the brief marriage between the King of England and Anne Bolyn.)





The stage's debut at the Mark Ellinger Theater on March 15, 1956 was an unabashedly sentimental and personal triumph, and an overwhelming critical success. To many sitting in the audience, the part of Professor Henry Higgins seemed more Rex Harrison than Rex Harrison. Indeed, as an actor's actor, Rex was in his element. He seemed to take dastardly delight in the sharp tongue lashings Higgins gave Eliza (Julie Andrews on the stage). There was a meter, a distinct note of tempo; seamlessly blending man and mythology into one great character. The role earned the 48 year old actor his second Tony Award.

While starring to sell out crowds, Rex moved in with Kay Kendall at a home they rented on Long Island. It was the beginning of the end of their mutual fascination for all things effortless and playful. Unbeknownst to Kendall, she had been diagnosed with inoperable leukemia; a fate confided to Rex by her private physician. Distraught, and still married to Lily, Rex relayed the tragic news to his wife who – with characteristic nonchalance instructed her husband to divorce her and marry Kay for as long as she had left to live; further vowing to re-marry Rex herself once the inevitable had occurred.

On June 23, 1947 Rex wed Kay and MGM fashioned a star vehicle for the couple; **The Reluctant Debutante** (1958) the one bright filmic spot on Rex's otherwise inconsequential postwar Hollywood career. But on September 6, 1959, Kendall died at the age of 32, leaving Rex devastated and alone for the first time in his life.

Unable to draw any sort of clarity or meaning from the loss, Rex retreated to London; accepting a standard actor's salary to star in Chekov's **Platonov** at the Royal Court Theater. The play was a hit, winning the prestigious *Evening Standard Award*. It also marked the beginning of Rex's most complicated and troubled relationship to date; to 33 yr old Rachel Roberts.

In the meantime, 20th Century-Fox approached Rex with the prospect of co-starring in their mega-budgeted spectacle, **Cleopatra** (1963). Though Rex agreed to appear in the film as Caesar – turning in yet another powerful performance – his presence in the film was all but eclipsed and overshadowed by the scandalous affair between costars, Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton.





(Top: Rex as Julius Caesar welcomes Cleopatra (Elizabeth Taylor) into Rome. The wily Queen of the Nile reciprocates with a curiously seductive wink. Above: Eliza Doolittle (Audrey Hepburn) arrives at the races with Col. Pickering (Wilfred Hyde White) and a very reluctant Prof. Henry Higgins (Harrison). Though her initial cute meet with the cultured set is a success, very shortly Eliza will slip in her performance – yelling for the race horse ‘Dover’ to move his “bloomin’ ass!”)

The most expensive movie ever made to date, not even **Cleopatra**'s \$24 million dollar box office gross could offset the film's elephantine budget. For years afterward, it would remain on the Fox's ledgers as the film that nearly sank the studio. If the release of **Cleopatra** did nothing to further Rex's career, it equally did nothing to hamper it either.

In fact, Rex was at the cusp of screen immortality when Warner Brother executive chief, Jack L. Warner hired him to reprise his role in the filmic version of **My Fair Lady** (1964). Reportedly upon getting the offer, Rex threw the telephone high into the air and loudly declared *“By George, I’ve got it!”* Indeed, he had.



My Fair Lady was unstoppable; winning nine Oscars, including one justly deserved for Rex's fine performance.

Unfortunately for Rex, his relationship with Rachel Roberts had already begun to crumble. A manic depressive with dependencies on pills and alcohol, Roberts quickly became the unmanageable portion of Rex's life. Throwing himself into work on his latest project, **The Agony and the Ecstasy** (1965), Rex excelled as the unrelenting Pope Julius II who commissions Michelangelo (Charlton Heston) to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. **"Rex was in fact a kind of a thorny guy,"** Heston relayed years later in reflection on their costarring, **"There you are. But he was so good, it was worth the trouble it took."**



A compelling character study, the film was not a huge success for Fox, and it was followed by two more ill received projects. The first, **The Honey Pot** (1967) cast Rex as a man faking his own death to quietly observe who among his closest friends would turn on him for their share of his inheritance; the second - **Doctor Doolittle** (1967); an elephantine musical with only mediocre songs. Despite this shortcoming and when viewed today, **Doctor Doolittle** is engaging entertainment, primarily due to Rex's superb performance as a veterinarian who discovers a rare gift of being able to talk to animals. In 1967, however, the film was little more than a strain on Fox's already precarious balance sheet.



In a last ditch effort to save his relationship with Rachel, Rex appeared to minor effect opposite Roberts in **A Flea in Her Ear** (1968); neither lived up to Rex's expectations. A year later, Rex and Rachel split and Rex costarred in his most bizarre film to date; **Staircase** (1969) playing half of a homosexual couple opposite his old **Cleopatra** costar, Richard Burton.

(Top: with Charlton Heston in **The Agony and The Ecstasy** – a unique character studio of the tempestuous relationship between Pope Julius II and painter Michelangelo. Center: as the irrepressibly enigmatic **Doctor Doolittle**, conversing with the rarest of specimens, a two-headed 'Push Me/Pull You.' Bottom: with wife Rachel Roberts in **A Flea In Her Ear** – a rather turgid comedy about polar opposites from the upper and lower English classes. Roberts' erratic alcoholism destroyed the marriage.)

CURTAIN CALLS

“Whatever it is that makes a person charming, it needs to remain a mystery. Once the charmer is aware of the mannerism or characteristic that others find charming, it ceases to be a mannerism and becomes an affectation.”

– Rex Harrison

The last acts of Rex Harrison’s life are hardly what one might have expected. Arguably, they were not what the actor would have wanted for himself either. In 1971, Rex married again for the fifth time – to Elizabeth Harris; a 35 year old divorcee with three young children. But Rex was not a family man and the relationship was doomed practically from the start.

Amidst a flurry of personal tensions, Rex managed to pen his own well received memoir. For two years thereafter, he toured the country in six plays, including a one man show based on Shaw’s theater critiques. Then, in 1977 while at a New Year’s celebration, Rex met Marcia Tinker who would become the sixth and final Mrs. Harrison.

Despite severe blindness, Rex also embarked upon an ambitious roster of stage productions including Shaw’s **Heartbreak House**, **The Kingfisher** (costarring Claudette Colbert) and the 25th anniversary of **My Fair Lady**.

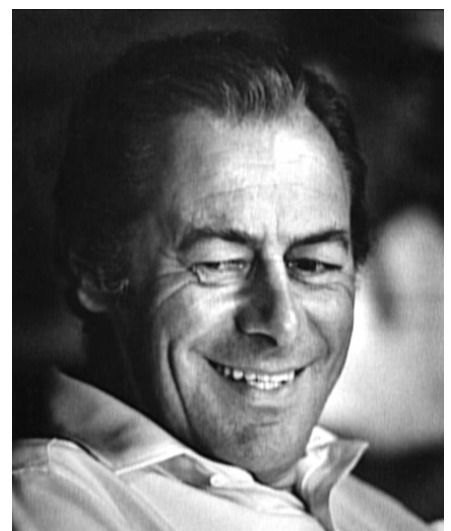
“I’m at the age,” Harrison mused, ***“where I’ve got to prove I’m just as good as I never was.”***

Perhaps the greatest accolade from these final years came when at the age of 82 Rex received a knighthood from Queen Elizabeth. The precedence for this remarkable appointment cannot be overstated. Until Rex’s time, no British subject who had been married more than once or had lived abroad would have even been considered for such an honor.

Still, when asked by a reporter if any special consideration had been afforded, Rex was his usual glib self. ***“Alas no. In the old days, I believe, you got a couple of horses out of the deal.”*** Internally though, Harrison was deeply moved by the honor. It was his crowning achievement, a moment unsurpassed in a career that had yet to reveal its final act.

That last curtain call came when Rex accepted an invitation to star on Broadway in **The Circle** (1989) with Glynis John and Stewart Granger. By now, he was nearly blind and gave his performance by pacing out the stage ahead of time. Six months into the run, Rex conceded that ill health precluded his continuing. On June 2, 1990, Rex Harrison died at the age of 82. At his own request his remains were scattered across the Mediterranean.

(Top: Rex in later years. Middle upper: with fifth wife, Elizabeth Harris; middle bottom: with sixth wife, Marcia Tinker. Bottom: a very telling sly grin between takes on the set of *My Fair Lady*.)



CODA



In the mid-30s, Hollywood had braced itself for what, in retrospect came to be known as the first 'British Invasion' – a mass exodus of talent from Britain during those terrible years of WWII. Yet, Rex Harrison did not arrive in America with his contemporaries, either to flee the London bombings or pursue his craft on Broadway or in American films. Instead, he continued to entertain his fellow countrymen until such time as Hollywood took an invested interest in him and beckoned with an invitation.

At once, this decision seems both bold and self assured. If Hollywood wanted Rex for their own they were going to have to come and get him. Like so many truly great talents of his era, Rex's career was always foremost on his list of things to do. While lovers, wives and mistresses came and went, the one constant in Rex Harrison's life remained his dedication to stage craft and cinema art.

Perhaps, read only superficially this love translates into inflated egotism. But in Rex Harrison's case, it also translates into a formidable body of work. The actor's indelible performances continue to resonate in their audience appeal. Hence, in the final analysis, though he may only have cared about his performance, Rex Harrison made his audiences fall in love with the characters he played.

"There is always a struggle," Rex once suggested in an interview, ***"...a striving for something bigger than yourself in all forms of art...and even if you don't achieve greatness – even if you fail, which we all must – everything...is somehow connected with your attitude toward life; your deepest secret feelings."***

