

## My Life Among Legends

Melodee K. Currier

When Davey Jones died recently, I posted on Facebook that I saw him frequently in New York City in 1964 at the coffee shop across the street from where he was playing in Oliver. As a result, two friends asked me to write an article about all the famous people I've known. I didn't realize I've had personal encounters with so many. The following photos are the way I remembered them. Here they are – in the order of meeting them:



**Meyer Lansky (Jewish Mafia)** – My father was Jewish, but he wasn't in the Jewish Mafia. Lansky and my father grew up together in Manhattan's lower east side and later Lansky was instrumental in the development of the "National Crime Syndicate" in the United States. For decades he was thought to be one of the most powerful people in the country. I am told he appears in my home movies (when I was a baby), relaxing around a pool in Miami Beach.



**Louis Price (The Popsicle King)** – Mr. Price was a co-founder of the Joe Lowe Co., makers of the famous “Popsicle,( now part of Sara Lee, Inc.) and one of my father’s best friends. I have fond memories riding in his chauffeured limousine in New York City in the 50’s and early 60’s and visiting him at his cabana at The Fountainebleau in Miami Beach where he spent the winters. My father and I visited him at his apartment in New York City the night before he died in the early 1960’s.



**Captain Eddie Rickenbacker** –Famous WWI U.S Flying Ace and President, Eastern Airlines. When I was ten, my father took me to Detroit to see a hockey game. While sitting in

the lobby of our hotel I heard a man yell “Harry!” They greeted each other like long lost friends and talked for quite a while. After I was introduced and we left the hotel, my father told me what an important person I just met.

**Frank Ritter (Jewish mafia)** – He set up gambling operations in the Bahamas with Meyer Lansky’s (mentioned above) money. In 1967 he was under indictment for violating federal anti-racketeering statutes and wasn’t allowed to come back into the U.S. I first met him and his son, Frank Jr. (my age), at the Eden Roc in Miami Beach through my father. I went water skiing that weekend with Frank Jr. In 1964, when I was living at the Barbizon Hotel for Women in New York City, he, his wife and son picked me up in his chauffeured limousine and we went to a very exclusive Italian restaurant where we had our own private room. They were the nicest family.



**Robert Morse (actor)** – My father’s best friend was the Treasurer of the theater that housed “How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying”, starring Robert Morse. I told him Robert Morse was my favorite actor and he arranged for me to meet him after one of his

matinees. Morse was really cute, but seemed quite shy. He didn't seem to know what to say to me. I wrote to him in the 1990's and received a reply back.



[georgecarlin.com](http://georgecarlin.com)

**George Carlin (comedian)** - I saw George Carlin when I was 16 -- at the Cafe Catacomb in Ft. Lauderdale, FL (near the Elbo Room). He was just starting out -- very clean cut and wore a suit and tie. My table was right next to him. I laughed so hard at his jokes that he stopped the show and told everyone he should take me with him wherever he goes because I made him look so good. I wrote to him in 2000, but never received a response.



**Davy Jones (English singer, actor)** - When he was playing in “Oliver!” on Broadway (before he was one of The Monkees), during breaks he would go across the street to a coffee shop which was next door to my father's theater ticket agency -- I saw him there frequently. I never spoke with him, just observed him. He always seemed upbeat and had friends around him.



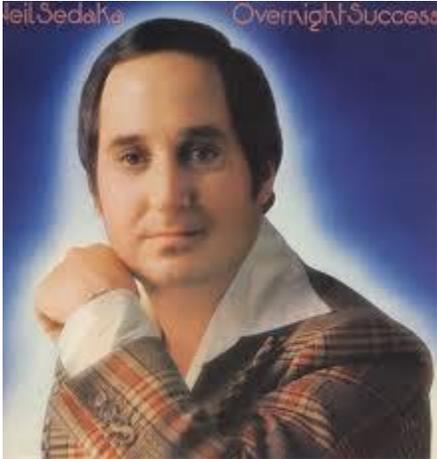
**Gwen Verdon (actress)** – She starred in “Damn Yankees” on Broadway and occasionally stopped by my father’s ticket agency just to say hi. On one of her visits, around 1955, she signed my autograph book.



**Richard Burton (actor)** – In 1960 he starred in “Camelot” on Broadway in the theater next door to my father’s ticket agency. When he arrived at the theater (and when he left) there were crowds of fans trying to get a glimpse of him. He had a lot of charisma, but was rough looking.



**Milton Berle (comedian)** – On a visit Lindy’s Restaurant (NYC) to meet some of my father’s cronies, I met Milton Berle. He was seated at the head of a long table filled with men my father knew. My father asked me if I had ever met him and I said I hadn’t, so he introduced me to him. I found him to be a regular guy.



**Neil Sedaka (singer)** – In 1962 I was at a Miami Beach hotel playing shuffleboard with a bunch of kids when Neil Sedaka came up to us and asked if he could join us. His song “Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen” was on the charts and I was 16! He was there to visit his mother who was staying at that hotel. I was surprised how skuzzy he looked.



**Jaclyn Smith (actress)** – Prior to becoming the “Breck Girl” or a “Charlie’s Angel,” Ellen (her real first name) moved to the Barbizon Hotel for Woman in New York City from Texas. She wanted to model and was taking dancing lessons. I was also staying at the Barbizon while

attending Woods Secretarial School in 1965. I would often stop by her room and we would talk – mostly about her high school boyfriend and her close-knit family. She was as nice as she was beautiful. When her parents were in town they bought their theater tickets from my father. In 2011 I sent her an email and she remembered me and wrote back.



**Katie Saylor (actress)** – She was also a friend of mine at The Barbizon and was trying to get acting jobs. About 10 years later she starred as “Liana” in “The Fantastic Journey” (TV series in 1970) and appeared in several movies from the 70’s thru the 90’s. She was from Greenwich, CT and her father was Larry Adrich, the dress designer. She was absolutely gorgeous – this photo doesn’t do her justice.

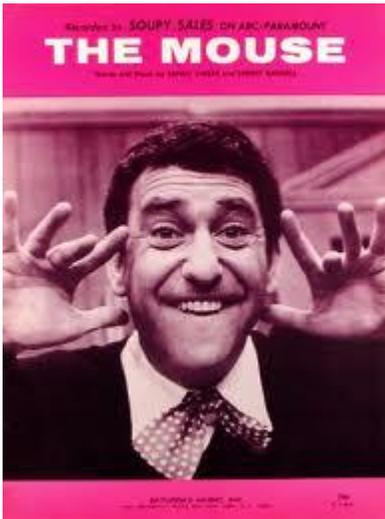


**Troy Donahue (actor)** –I happened to be in Katie Saylor’s (mentioned above) room when she was expecting a call from him (sometime in 1966). She was busy and asked me to answer it. It was thrilling speaking to this heart throb. She told me she was going to be in the movie, “Come Spy With Me”, with him in Jamaica – and she was dating him.



**James Coburn (actor)** – Two girlfriends and I went to the Salvadore Dali museum in NYC. We saw James Coburn there also looking at paintings. My friends dared me to go up

and say something to him. So I went up to him and asked him if he were James Coburn. He said yes, but wasn't very friendly. It was a quick conversation.



**Soupy Sales** – In 1965 when Soupy Sales' song "The Mouse" was popular, I saw him sitting in back of his limousine in New York City while I was walking on the sidewalk. He turned around, smiled at me and I quickly did the dance to "The Mouse" and then he did too. We both laughed until his limo was out of sight.



**Huntington Hartford III (A&P Heir)** - In 1964, one of my friends at The Barbizon, who also went to The Wood School with me and was Miss Danbury Connecticut, was one of his mistresses. He would pick her up often in front of The Barbizon for their dates. The rumor was

that he had several mistresses living at The Barbizon. He liked women who were many years younger than him. He died in 2008 at the age of 97.

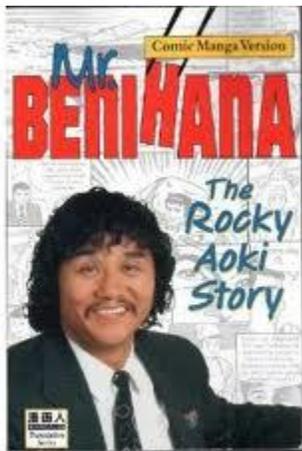
**Wylie O'Hara** – Wylie lived at The Barbizon and also attended The Wood School with me in 1965. We had breakfast and dinner together every day as part of our package at The Barbizon. She was the daughter of John O'Hara, the author "Butterfield 8" and other books.



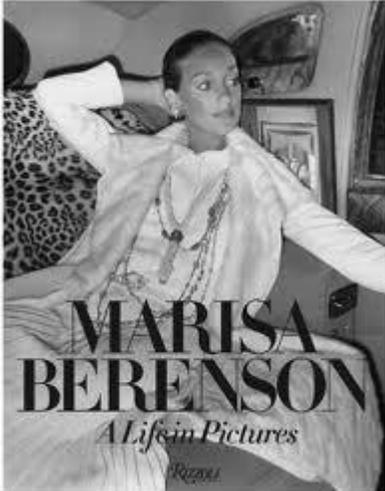
**Jane Mansfield (actress)** – While waiting for a parade to start on Fifth Avenue next to Central Park in 1965 (she died in 1967), I saw her walk across the street. She was dressed very provocatively and kept turning her head around to see who was watching her.



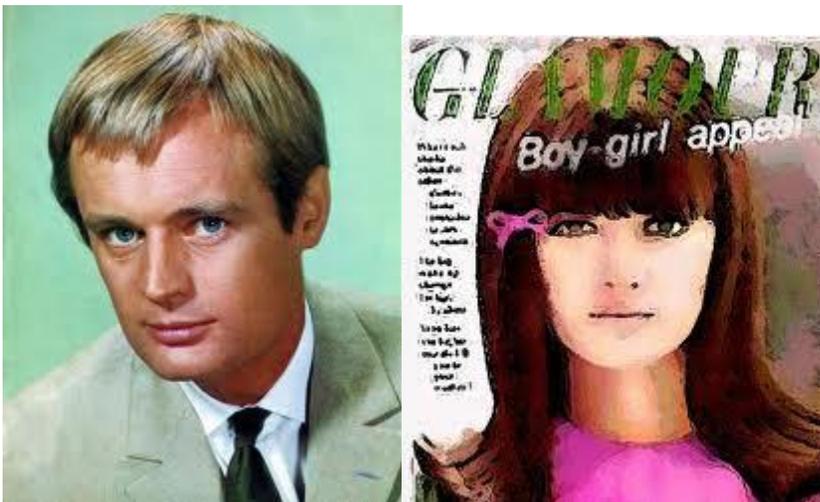
**Art Linkletter (TV personality)** – As I walked through the lobby of The Barbizon one day in 1965, I saw him standing at the front desk. I walked up to him and said hello. He told me he was registering his daughter. He asked me how I liked living there. He was quite talkative and super nice.



**Rocky Aoki (owner of Benihana restaurants)** Rocky had been an Olympic wrestler. I was dating “Bob”, a friend of his who was a collegiate wrestling champion. Bob introduced me to Rocky the first time we had dinner at the Benihana on W. 56<sup>th</sup> Street in NYC in 1965 and they would always talk whenever we went there.

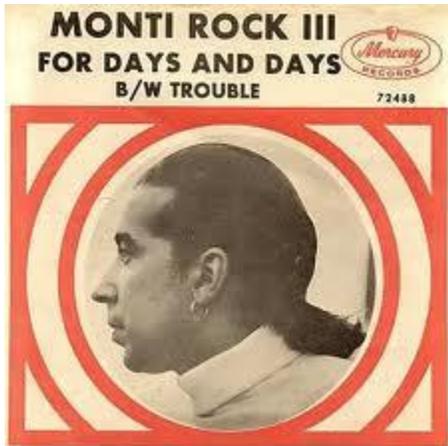


**Marisa Berenson (famous model in the 60's)** – She and I had an appointment with the same hairdresser at the same time. She sat next to me (with her little yappy dog), was very phony, spoke French to the hairdresser, wore pale pink corduroy pants and ordered the dog a hamburger for lunch. I couldn't wait to get out of there!

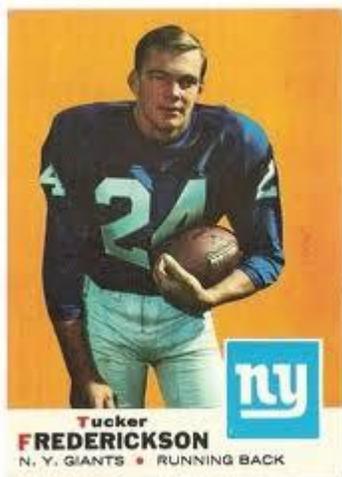


**David McCallum – “The Man from UNCLE” (actor)** – When I lived at The Carleton House on E. 57<sup>th</sup> Street in NYC about 1966, David McCallum was dating Katherine Carpenter,

famous high fashion model who lived in my building. (I found out years later that my father paid the building doorman to keep him informed about me.)



**Monte Rock III (TV personality)** – He was very eccentric and a regular on the Tonight Show in the 60's. He lived in my building on E. 57<sup>th</sup> Street. One day he got on the elevator with me and said "What's happenin' baby?"



**Tucker Frederickson (New York Giants)** – When I was working for an advertising agency in 1967 I answered the phone for my boss and when I asked who I should say is calling, he said “Tucker Frederickson.” I said, “Yea, right!” to which he replied, “I really am Tucker Frederickson.” I told him I didn’t believe him and later asked my boss who confirmed that it was really him.



**Robert Goulet (actor)** – While riding in a taxi in NYC in 1965, I saw Robert Goulet, also in a taxi, pass me. As he did, he gave me a big wink.

**Tony Amendola (founder of D’Arcy Advertising Agency)** One day after work a friend and I went to happy hour in the Pan Am building where we met him. He gave us his business card and suggested we apply at his agency. I decided to apply and told the agency that Mr. Amendola was a good friend of mine -- and got the job. On my first day at work I stopped by his office and reminded him who I was. I told him I mentioned he was a good friend of mine when I applied for the job. He remembered me immediately and was amused by my chutzpah. Years later I learned he was a founder of that ad agency. No wonder I got the job!



**Roy Rodgers and Dale Evans (actors)** – On January 6, 1967, the day I married my first husband, we were at the registration desk of The Hilton (NYC) and Roy Rodgers and Dale Evans were also registering. They were dressed like you're used to seeing them and they spoke to us for a long time. Genuine people.



**Woody Allen and Louise Lasser (Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman) (actors)** - They sat near me at a boxing match at Madison Square Gardens in 196X). She looked beautiful. This photo doesn't do her justice.



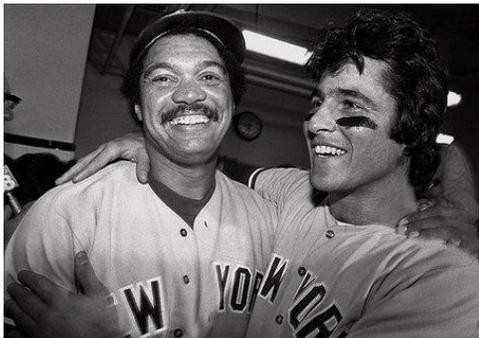
**Carol Channing (actress)** – In 1966, while walking by the St. James Theater in NYC where “Hello Dolly” was playing, Carol Channing appeared in front of me, looking great.



**George Wallace – (Governor of Alabama)** – I didn't care for him because of his views on segregation. However, in 1972 when a friend (the woman in the middle – I'm on the right) called to ask if I'd be a hostess for his Presidential campaign dinner in Toledo, Ohio, I said yes. That was three months before he was shot and paralyzed. At the end of the 70's he changed his attitude on segregation and the change in him was impressive.



**Doug Henning (magician)** – When my son was 8, I took him to see Doug Henning’s Magic Show in Toledo (in 1976). After the show we went back stage and met him. He spent time talking with Deron and it really made his day.



**NY Yankees** – My second husband, my son (10 years old at the time), and I went to Chicago for a weekend in 1978. When my son saw that the New York Yankees were staying at our hotel, he didn’t want to leave the hotel. He got many autographs from them that weekend which we later got framed. Most of the players were nice. However, when my son asked Reggie Jackson for his autograph, he stomped hard on his foot, causing him to cry, and wouldn’t give him his autograph. What a surprisingly mean person!



**Geri O'Neil (author and teacher)** – I first met Geri at a self-publishing seminar in Boca Raton in 1983. I have referred to her first book, “Super Self - Life Without Limits”, hundreds of times over the years. She was also my “Course in Miracles” teacher and I attended many of her workshops. Now she continues to write, travels worldwide and lectures on cruises.



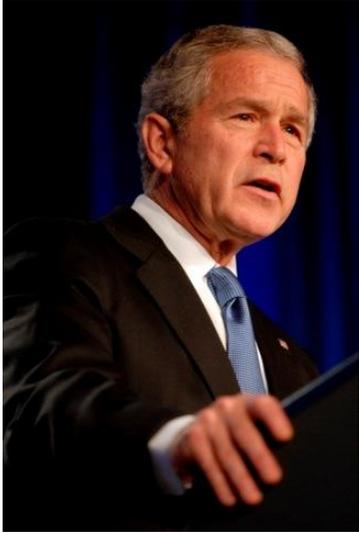
**Wayne Dyer (author)** – I have been a fan of his since his first book, *Your Erroneous Zones*, in 1976. In 1989, I attended a fundraiser luncheon at the Boca Raton Hotel & Club where he was the speaker. I bought one of his tape sets and asked him to autograph it. I told him he was my guru and he surprised me by saying, “No, you are your own guru.” On another occasion when I was at church, I glanced toward the door to see him standing in the doorway. I announced to the three women at my table “There’s Wayne Dyer – I just love him!” One of the women at the table said “I love him too – he’s my son!” I was thrilled when he sat down at the table next to me – so close we could almost rub elbows.



**Linda Evans (actress)** – When her boyfriend at the time, Yanni, was in Columbus, Ohio for a concert in 1992 or 1993, she sat close to me in the audience. She sat by herself and she looked great. No one knew it was her until I mentioned it to a couple people. Then people began asking her for her autograph.



**Dave Thomas (Wendy's founder)** – After I started working in Wendy's Legal Department in 1998, I saw Dave Thomas at occasional Wendy's events. Around 2001, he invited my department to his home on Buckeye Lake. I decided not to go. Unlike his personality on TV commercials, he was usually very quiet and passive.



**President George W. Bush** – When he visited Wendy's in 2006, I was chosen to be part of a small audience to hear him speak about Health Savings Accounts. It was amazing what the company had to do to get ready for his visit. His energy was electric and he had a lot of charisma.



**Marilyn Minter (artist)** - We were friends at Pompano Beach Senior High School and hung around together in New York City following graduation. She has lived in NYC ever since and is now a famous artist known worldwide. I visited her at her loft in 2007 and it was as though no time had passed since we last saw each other. I look forward to receiving her Christmas cards each year as they are always her special creation.