

**PEARL
LOUISE
ALLBRITTON**
1920-1979



**PURSUING
HER
ACTING
DREAMS**

In a kinder world, vivacious film actress Louise Allbritton would have inherited the "screwball comedy" mantle vacated by the late Carole Lombard when she died in a 1942 plane crash. But she went straight from Pasadena Playhouse to the "B" movies of Universal Pictures, a studio notorious for its mishandling of unique talents.

She was born Pearl Louise Allbritton in July 1920 in Oklahoma City. Shortly thereafter, the family moved to Wichita Falls, Texas. At sixteen, her mother died, leaving her father to manage a 10,000-acre ranch and corral Louise's determination to become an actress.

He sent Louise to the University of Oklahoma to study journalism in 1938. Two years later, she quit and moved to Hollywood. A tall, vivacious blonde beauty, she was often compared to Carole Lombard, especially in the roles of a "screwball comedy". She gained acting experience with positive reviews as an apprentice at the Pasadena Playhouse. She tried unsuccessfully to get film work but was told she was too tall at five-foot-seven!

She remained at the Playhouse for several productions but, without film work, she began to think about moving back to Texas. As so often happens, a Columbia Pictures scout saw her on stage and offered her a role in an upcoming Fay Wray-Paul Kelly film called "Not a Ladies Man", which stunk. She was in another Columbia stinker – "Parachute Nurse" (1942), where she claimed she played the parachute.

Her father cut off her allowance in hopes that Louise would return home, but she signed a seven-year contract with Universal Studios in 1942. The studio was known for firing actors who later found stardom at other studios. Before World War II, Louise graced magazine ads for Frederies True-Curl, a hair care company. In 1943, she toured Europe with an USO group, giving shows "to the accompaniment of thunder of enemy guns". Before she returned to the United States to resume her film career, her good friend Carol Landis introduced her to war correspondent Charles Collingwood.

Her most notable film was "Son of Dracula" (1943) with Oklahoma-born Lon Chaney, Jr. She also starred in "Pittsburg" with Marlene Dietrich and John Wayne, and "Sitting Pretty" with Robert Young and Maureen O'Hara. She then starred in "The Egg and I" (1947) with Claudette Colbert and Fred McMurray, which introduced Marjorie Main and Percy Kilbride as Ma and Pa Kettle. Her final movie was the Randolph Scott western "The Doolins of Oklahoma" (1949).

In 1946, she married CBS news reporter Collingwood, an early member of Edward R. Murrow's tight-knit group of foreign correspondents that included Walter Cronkite and Eric Sevareid. He reported from the Normandy landings during World War II and was among the early ranks of television journalists. After their marriage, Louise often traveled the globe while he was on assignments.

Collingwood accompanied First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy on a Valentine's Day 1962 television special when "A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy" was broadcast live on television and seen by eighty million viewers in fifty countries. He substituted for Walter Cronkite only minutes after Cronkite announced the death of President Kennedy in Dallas in November 1963. Collingwood was also CBS's chief foreign correspondent from 1964 to 1975, covering warfare in Southeast Asia.

Louise continued working in New York City television until she retired in the 1960s. She died of spinal bone cancer in February 1979 at age 48 in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, where she and Collingwood had one of their many homes.