

**GLEND
PATRICIA
FARRELL**
1901-1971



**HAD
HER
OWN
STYLE**

Legendary 1930s actresses Fay Wray, Lillian Gish, Jean Harlow, and Mary Pickford are still remembered for the characters they created. At the same time, actress Glenda Farrell, created “The Type” – a tough, uncompromising, all-knowing, wisecracking, undefeatable blonde whose style has been repeatedly copied over the years.

Glenda Farrell was born in June 1901 in Enid. Her mother dreamed her daughter would be an actress. She took her first acting role at age seven in Wichita in the play Uncle Tom’s Cabin. After moving to San Diego, Farrell appeared in the April 1919 issue of Motion Picture Magazine. Like her peers, the five-foot-three beauty shaved a few years off her age, claiming she was born in 1904.

She met her first husband in 1920 at a Navy dance. On a train ride to Hollywood for a screen test, they were secretly married. They traveled from town to town, with their dancing vaudeville act. Their son Tommy was born in October 1921. Due to his drinking problems, they divorced in 1929.

In 1928, Farrell was cast in the play The Spider. She left Tommy with her mother and went to New York. Due to her critically-praised performance in the play On the Spot, Warner Brothers cast her opposite Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. in the classic film Little Caesar. Soon Jack Warner signed her to a long-term contract. She starred in I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang, Mystery of the Wax Museum, and a series of nine films with Joan Blondell as smart, sassy, wisecracking dames.

In 1937, Farrell was cast in her own film series as Torchy Blane, the fast-talking newspaper reporter, opposite Barton MacLane. The first film Smart Blonde was a surprise hit making her a popular star. She portrayed Torchy in seven more films. A young aspiring comic book writer named Jerry Siegel, who was developing Superman liked Farrell’s portrayal of Torchy Blane so much that he based the character Lois Lane on her.

In 1941, while performing on Broadway, Farrell sprained her ankle during a performance. She was treated backstage by audience member Dr. Henry Ross. A West Point graduate and highly respected surgeon, he and Farrell married soon after. She continued to work on the stage while Dr. Ross served as General Eisenhower’s chief of health in Europe during the war.

In 1949, Farrell made the transition to television, appearing in over forty series from 1950 and 1969, and winning an Emmy award for her supporting role in Ben Casey in 1963. She also starred in Kissin’ Cousins with Elvis Presley and The Disorderly Orderly with Jerry Lewis with her son.

Her final role was the Broadway play Forty Carats. In December 1968, she was diagnosed with lung cancer, though she never smoked, even faking it for movie scenes. She died in New York City in May 1971. She was buried in West Point Cemetery, due to her husband’s status – the first actress so honored.

In 1977, Ross donated 38 acres to the Putnam County Land Trust in southern New York, establishing the Glenda Farrell-Henry Ross Preserve. When he died in 1991, he was buried with her.