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upon America like a meteor—and burned up as quickly.

Jean Harlow's meteoric rise was ignited by her mother (left) and aided by stepfather (right) who posed as her chauffeur.

Movies



# Hollywood's Greatest Glamour Girl

**She died 21 years ago this week, but she has never been replaced and probably never will be; her name: Jean Harlow.**

by Bernard Asbell

**D**O YOU REMEMBER the day—only yesterday, it seems—when the incredible news broke that Jean Harlow, the personification of Hollywood glamour, was dead? Well, a baby born on that day would be old enough to vote next Saturday, June 7. It's been 21 years!

In those years, motion pictures have climbed progressively through Technicolor, Cinemascope, and Marilyn Monroe. The national culture has absorbed the shock of a second world war, the rise of television, the explosions of rock-and-roll and the rocket age, and the transplanting of the Brooklyn Dodgers to Los Angeles. But we have not yet produced another sex symbol as durable and altogether demolishing as Jean Harlow.

So it's fitting that we refresh our spirits with the tantalizing memory of the Blonde Bombshell, if for no other reason than to pose before the new generation the old track record.

In 1929, two major events rocked America. One was the collapse of Wall Street. The other was a scene in one of the earliest talking pictures, "Hell's Angels." No, not the scene where 90 airplanes roared through a thunderstorm, but the one where a lady with a lightning-hued head of hair and a low, low-cut evening dress slinked quietly into the screen and cooed:

"Do you mind if I slip into something more comfortable?"

While bankrupt executives everywhere were leaping from penthouses, an obscure Hollywood extra, Jean Harlow, had put herself in business.

Jean Harlow's arrival had been piloted by a most able engineer who could read a timetable, fix a destination, and keep to both. This was her mother—the real Jean Harlow, in more ways than one.

Mother's maiden name was Jean Harlow when she married Monte Carpentier, an easygoing dentist in Kansas

City. They named their daughter, born March 3, 1911, Harlean Carpentier. But until the day their child died 26 years later, Mother always called her "Baby." Soon after Harlean was born, Mother divorced Carpentier and married a sombre but romantic-looking Latin named Marino Bello.

Mother had always craved to be an actress, but the opportunity had never come. As movies and her daughter Harlean began to develop into maturity, however, it became obvious that these two could do interesting things for each other. So Mrs. Bello moved her daughter and herself to Hollywood.

There, the daughter took on a life carefully designed by her mother, even assuming her mother's name; and Jean Harlow was born.

The way the story goes, her career was launched near the soda fountain of Kehoe's drugstore. A director is supposed to have seen her and, as they say in the trade, he flipped. According

to legend, some big director is always discovering some raving beauty in a drugstore, then rushing over to get her name. This really is not true. He sends an assistant over to get her name.

"Jolly Jewallopers!" this big director is alleged to have spluttered. "Look at that head of hair! Go get her name."

The hair wasn't quite silver and it wasn't quite gold. It was quite indescribable, and perhaps this entire incident isn't quite true. It is predicated on the idea that Jean Harlow was discovered by chance and Mrs. Bello was not likely to have left so critical an event to mere chance.

**D**URING AN EARLIER visit to Hollywood,

Mrs. Bello had perceived that it didn't matter so much who you were as who you seemed to be. So, this trip, she rented a spacious house and threw generous parties, inviting filmland people that Jean had met working as an extra.