

Alan Ladd Biography

Alan Walbridge Ladd (Nickname Laddie) was born September 3, 1913 to an English mother in Hot Springs, Arkansas. His accountant father died when he was four.

At age five he burned his apartment playing with matches and his mother moved them to Oklahoma City. He was malnourished, undersized, nicknamed Tiny, and his mother married a house painter who moved them to California a la "Grapes of Wrath". He was eight. He picked fruit, delivered papers, swept stores.

Moving to California as a child, Ladd became a gifted sportsman, and also took to performing in school productions. In high school he discovered track and swimming. By 1931 he was training for the 1932 Olympics, but an injury cancelled plans. He opened a hamburger stand, Tiny's Patio, then worked as a grip at Warner's.

Struggling to enter acting, Ladd supported himself in a number of odd jobs – including as a gas station attendant, a hot dog vendor and a lifeguard.

His first real foray into show business came in radio, where Alan played small parts, and he then moved into local theatre. It was as a grip and bit-player that Ladd began to enter the film-world in his late teens. He was appearing regularly in minor film parts by the mid 1930s.

He married friend Midge in 1936 but couldn't afford her so they lived apart. In 1937 they shared a friend's apartment. She delivered Alan, Jr., and his destitute alcoholic mother moved in with them, her agonizing suicide from ant poison witnessed a few months later by her son.

In 1941 he landed the small part of the reporter in Orson Welles' classic, 'Citizen Kane'.

His size (Height 5' 6") and coloring were regarded as not right for movies so he worked hard at radio. He met Hollywood agent and former screen actress, Sue Carol, around this time. She helped him get work and promoted him around town, landing him a major part as an assassin in the 1942 film, 'This Gun for Hire', opposite Veronica Lake. After divorcing his first wife, Ladd and Carol married in 1942.

The visual combination of Ladd and Lake proved so popular that they were paired for several other films, including 'The Blue Dahlia', 'Saigon' and 'The Glass Key'.

Ladd's films remained on the Top Ten box-office list in 1947, 1953, and 1954, as he played a succession of action-packed, tough-guy roles.

Ladd portrayed Dan Holiday on Mutual Radio's "Box 13" (1948-1949). This show was also syndicated.

It was in the classic Western, 'Shane', in 1953, where Ladd truly excelled himself, in an uncharacteristically honest role, showcasing both his visual magnetism and subtle style.

Most of his other 1950s films were clichéd bare-chested bar room movies, and his stardom was waning by the early 1960s.

By the end of the fifties, liquor and a string of so-so movies had taken their toll. In November 1962 he was found unconscious lying in a pool of blood with a bullet wound near his heart. In January 1964 he was found dead, apparently due to an accidental combination of alcohol and sedatives.

Spouse

Sue Carol (1942 - 29 January 1964) (his death) children: Alana, David
Marjorie Midge' Jane Harrold' (1936 - 1941) (divorced) son Alan

Ladd was the father of actors Alan Ladd Jr. and David Ladd, and former child actress Alana Ladd.

Ladd continued to make films up until his early death, aged 51, on January 29, 1964.

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