

RAYMOND BURR

Raymond William Stacey Burr (May 21, 1917, to September 12, 1993) was an actor, most known for his roles in the television dramas Perry Mason and Ironside.

Life and acting career

He was born in New Westminster, British Columbia, Canada to William Johnston Burr (a descendant of Irish immigrants) and Minerva Smith (who was of Scottish and English descent). A dual citizen of Canada and the United States, Burr served in the U.S. Navy in World War II and was wounded at the Battle of Okinawa. Burr broke into films in 1946 and made 90 in the next decade. He co-starred in the classics *A Place in the Sun* and *Rear Window*.

Burr usually played menacing villains on the screen, although in 1956 he played the heroic reporter Steve Martin in *Godzilla*, *King of the Monsters*, the American re-edited version of the Japanese film *Gojira*. He reprised this role nearly three decades later in *Godzilla 1985*.

A young Raymond Burr

With the international success of *Godzilla*, and shortly after starring on the radio drama *Fort Laramie*, Burr was chosen to star in 1957 in *Perry Mason* where he played Erle Stanley Gardner's clever defense attorney who always defended the innocent and only lost one case ("The Case of the Deadly Verdict," 10/17/1963; his client withheld evidence needed to win).

The show was very popular and lasted nine years. In 1967, Burr started another long running television series *Ironside* (known as *A Man Called Ironside* in the UK) in which he played a police chief who used a wheelchair for mobility. This show ran until 1975.

Subsequent to this, Burr had a couple of other short-lived series such as *Kingston: Confidential* but was unable to repeat his earlier hits. He co-starred in such TV films as *Love's Savage Fury* (1979), *Eisched: Only The Pretty Girls Die* (1979), *Disaster On The Coastliner* (1979), *The Curse Of King Tut's Tomb* (1980), *The Night The City Screamed* (1980), *Peter And Paul* (1981), and *They Call Me MISTER Bonobo!* (1982). Burr also had a supporting role in Dennis Hopper's controversial film *Out of the Blue* (1980) and spoofed his Perry Mason image in *Airplane II: The Sequel* (1982). In 1985, Burr made a comeback as Perry Mason and made a series of 26 two-hour movies that were enormous ratings blockbusters, the last being completed only a few weeks prior to his death. By this time he was a wheelchair user (in his final Mason movie, he is always shown either sitting, or standing while leaning on a table, but never standing unsupported), as his character in *Ironside* had been, but this time due to his real-life failing health. He also reprised the role of *Ironside* not long before his death, having to dye his hair red and shave off his trademark beard in order not to look too much like Perry Mason.

Showing charity

In contrast to the "bad guys" and hard, unbending heroes he often played, Raymond Burr was in real life a generous man who gave enormous sums of money (including his salaries from the Perry Mason movies) to charity. He once sponsored 27 foster children through Christian Childrens Fund. He would take the children with the greatest medical needs. He would insist that TV executives and directors treat his co-stars with the same respect shown him. He also gave generously over many years to the McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento.

He was heavily involved in raising money for The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum in Sanibel, Florida .

Burr died of liver cancer on September 12, 1993 in Sonoma, California, aged 76.

For the Old Time Radio Researchers, I'm your announcer, _____. Enjoy the show!