

= Leslie Nielsen =

Leslie William Nielsen , OC (11 February 1926 ? 28 November 2010) was a Canadian actor , comedian , and producer . He appeared in more than 100 films and 150 television programs , portraying more than 220 characters .

Nielsen was born in Regina , Saskatchewan . He enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force and later worked as a disc jockey before receiving a scholarship to study theatre at the Neighborhood Playhouse . Making his acting debut in 1948 , he made more than 50 television appearances two years later . Nielsen made his film debut in 1956 , with supporting roles in several drama , western , and romance films produced between the 1950s and the 1970s , with Nielsen crossing genres in both television and films .

Although his notable performances in the films *Forbidden Planet* and *The Poseidon Adventure* gave him standing as a serious actor , Nielsen later gained enduring recognition for his deadpan comedy roles during the 1980s and the early 1990s , after being cast against type for the Zucker , Abrahams and Zucker comedy film *Airplane !* . Nielsen specialized in his portrayal of characters oblivious to and complicit in their absurd surroundings , which gave him a reputation as a comedian . *Airplane !* marked Nielsen 's turning point , which made him " the Olivier of spoofs " according to film critic Roger Ebert ; his work on the film also led to further success in the genre with *The Naked Gun* film series , which are based on their earlier short @-@ lived television series *Police Squad !* , in which he also starred . Nielsen received a variety of awards and was inducted into the Canada and Hollywood Walks of Fame .

= = Early life = =

Nielsen was born on 11 February 1926 in Regina , Saskatchewan . His mother , Mabel Elizabeth (née Davies) , was a Welsh immigrant , and his father , Ingvard Eversen Nielsen , was a Danish @-@ born constable in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police . Nielsen had two brothers ; the elder , Erik Nielsen (1924 ? 2008) , was Deputy Prime Minister of Canada from 1984 to 1986 .

His half @-@ uncle , Jean Hersholt , was an actor known for his portrayal of Dr. Christian in a radio series of that name and the subsequent television series and films . In a 1994 *Boston Globe* article , Nielsen explained , " I did learn very early that when I would mention my uncle , people would look at me as if I were the biggest liar in the world . Then I would take them home and show them 8 @-@ by @-@ 10 glossies , and things changed quite drastically . So I began to think that maybe this acting business was not a bad idea , much as I was very shy about it and certainly without courage regarding it . My uncle died not too long after I was in a position to know him . I regret that I had not a chance to know him better . "

Nielsen lived for several years in Fort Norman (now Tulita) , Northwest Territories where his father was with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police . His father was a troubled man who beat his wife and sons , and Leslie longed to escape . When he graduated from high school at 17 , he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force even though he was legally deaf (he wore hearing aids most of his life) . Following graduation from Victoria School of Performing and Visual Arts in Edmonton , Nielsen enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force and trained as an aerial gunner during World War II . He was too young to be fully trained or sent overseas . He worked briefly as a disc jockey at a Calgary , Alberta , radio station , before enrolling at the Lorne Greene Academy of Radio Arts , Toronto . While studying in Toronto , Nielsen received a scholarship to the Neighborhood Playhouse . He noted , " I couldn 't refuse , but I must say when you come from the land of the snow goose , the moose and wool to New York , you 're bringing every ton of hayseed and country bumpkin that you packed . As long as I didn 't open my mouth , I felt a certain security . But I always thought I was going to be unmasked : ' OK , pack your stuff . ' ' Well , what 's the matter ? ' ' We 've discovered you have no talent ; we 're shipping you back to Canada . ' " He moved to New York City for his scholarship , studying theatre and music at the Neighborhood Playhouse , while performing in summer stock theatre . Afterward , he attended the Actors Studio , until making his first television appearance in 1948 on an episode of *Studio One* , alongside Charlton Heston , for which he was

paid \$ 75 .

= = Career = =

= = = Early career = = =

Nielsen 's career began in dramatic roles on television during " Television 's Golden Age " , appearing in almost 50 live programs in 1950 alone . He said there " was very little gold , we only got \$ 75 or \$ 100 per show . " He narrated documentaries and commercials and most of his early work as a dramatic actor was uneventful . Hal Erickson of Allmovie noted that " much of Nielsen 's early work was undistinguished ; he was merely a handsome leading man in an industry overstocked with handsome leading men . " In 1956 he made his feature film debut in the Michael Curtiz @-@ directed musical film The Vagabond King . In the Seattle Post @-@ Intelligencer , Nielsen remembered Curtiz as " a sadist , a charming sadist , but a sadist " . Nielsen called this film " The Vagabond Turkey " . Though the film was not a success , producer Nicholas Nayfack offered him an audition for the science fiction film Forbidden Planet , resulting in Nielsen 's taking a long contract with Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer (MGM) .

Forbidden Planet became an instant success , and roles in other MGM films such as Ransom ! (1956) , The Opposite Sex (1956) and Hot Summer Night (1957) followed . In 1957 he won the lead role opposite Debbie Reynolds in the romantic comedy Tammy and the Bachelor , which , as a Chicago Tribune critic wrote in 1998 , made people consider Nielsen a dramatic actor and handsome romantic lead . However , dissatisfied with the films he was offered , calling the studios " a Tiffany , which had forgotten how to make silver " , Nielsen left MGM after auditioning for Messala in the 1959 Ben @-@ Hur . Stephen Boyd got the role . After leaving the studios , Nielsen landed the lead role in the Disney miniseries The Swamp Fox , as American Revolutionary War hero Francis Marion . In a 1988 interview he reflected on the series , saying , " That was a great experience , because the Disney people didn 't do their shows like everyone else , knocking out an episode a week We only had to do an episode a month , and the budgets were extremely high for TV at that time . We had location shooting rather than cheap studio backdrops , and very authentic costumes . " Eight episodes were produced and aired between 1959 and 1961 .

His television appearances include Justice , Alfred Hitchcock Presents , Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea , The Virginian , and The Wild Wild West . In 1961 , he was the lead in a Los Angeles police drama called The New Breed . He guest @-@ starred in a 1964 episode of Daniel Boone with Fess Parker in a minor but credited role . In 1968 , he had a major role in the pilot for the police series Hawaii Five @-@ O , and appeared in one of the seventh @-@ season episodes . In 1969 , he had the leading role as a police officer in The Bold Ones : The Protectors .

In 1972 , Nielsen appeared as the ship 's captain in the The Poseidon Adventure . He also starred in the William Girdler 's 1977 action film , Project : Kill . His last dramatic role before mainly comedy roles was the 1979 Canadian disaster film City on Fire , in which he played a corrupt mayor . In 1980 , he guest @-@ starred as Sinclair on the CBS miniseries The Chisholms .

= = = Airplane ! and The Naked Gun = = =

Nielsen 's supporting role of Dr. Rumack in Zucker , Abrahams and Zucker 's 1980 's Airplane ! was a watershed in his career . The film , a parody of disaster films such as Zero Hour ! and Airport , was based on building a comedy around the actors known for dramatic roles . Other stars included Robert Stack , Peter Graves , and Lloyd Bridges . Nielsen 's deadpan delivery contrasted with the absurdity surrounding him . When asked , " Surely you can 't be serious ? " , he responded with a curt , " I am serious . And don 't call me Shirley . " In several interviews he reflected on the line : " I thought it was amusing , but it never occurred to me that it was going to become a trademark . It 's such a surprise ... the thing comes out , people say , ' What did he say ? ! ' " Nielsen said he was " ... pleased and honored that [he] had a chance to deliver that line . " The comedic exchange was at

79 on the American Film Institute 's AFI 's 100 Years ... 100 Movie Quotes . The American Film Institute included the film in its list of the top ten comedy films of all time in 2008 , and a 2007 survey in the United Kingdom judged it the second greatest comedy film of all time , while in 2012 Empire magazine voted it No. 1 in The 50 Funniest Comedies Ever poll . Critics praised the film , which also proved a long @-@ term success with audiences . In 2010 Airplane ! was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress .

The directors cast Nielsen for his ability to play like " a fish in water " , saying " You could have cast funny people and done it with everybody winking , goofing off , and silly ... we wanted people to be oblivious to the comedy . " For Nielsen , Airplane ! marked a shift from dramatic roles to deadpan comedy . When it was suggested his role in Airplane ! was against type , Nielsen protested that he had " always been cast against type before " , and that comedy was what he always wanted to do . The same directors cast Nielsen in a similar style , in their TV series Police Squad ! . The series introduced Nielsen as Frank Drebin , the stereotypical police officer modelled after serious characters in earlier police series .

Police Squad 's opening sequence was based on the 1950s show M Squad , which starred Lee Marvin , which opened with footage of a police car roving through a dark urban setting with a big band playing a jazz song in the background . The voice @-@ over and the show 's organization into acts with an epilogue was homage to Quinn Martin police dramas including The Fugitive , The Streets of San Francisco , Barnaby Jones , The F.B.I. , and Cannon . Nielsen portrayed a serious character whose one @-@ liners appeared accidental next to the pratfalls and sight gags that were happening around him . Although the show lasted only six episodes Nielsen received an Emmy Award nomination for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series .

Six years after cancellation of Police Squad ! , the film The Naked Gun : From the Files of Police Squad ! returned Nielsen to his role as Frank Drebin . It involved a ruthless drug king trying hypnosis to assassinate Queen Elizabeth II . Drebin , like the doctor in Airplane ! , seemed unaware of the absurdity of the scenes he was in , even while contributing to it . Nielsen did many of his own stunts : " You have an idea of how you 're going to do something , and it 's your vision ... unless you do it , it really doesn 't stand a chance . " This movie grossed over \$ 78 million and was well received by critics . Ebert 's 3 ½ ? star review (out of four) noted , " You laugh , and then you laugh at yourself for laughing . "

The Naked Gun spawned two sequels : The Naked Gun 2 ½ : The Smell of Fear (1991) and Naked Gun 33 ? : The Final Insult (1994) . Naked Gun 2 ½ grossed more than the original , with \$ 86 @.@ 9 million , while Naked Gun 33 ? grossed \$ 51 @.@ 1 million . Nielsen remained open to a fourth Naked Gun film , although he doubted that it would be produced ? " I don 't think so " , he said in 2005 . " If there hasn 't been one by now , I doubt it . I think it would be wonderful . "

Nielsen briefly appeared on the World Wrestling Federation program in the summer of 1994 on WWF Monday Night Raw ; capitalizing on Frank Drebin . Nielsen (and George Kennedy) were hired as sleuths to unravel the mystery of The Undertaker who had disappeared at January 's Royal Rumble event . At SummerSlam 1994 , in a Naked Gun parody , they were hot on the case (in fact , they were standing on a case) . Although they did not find The Undertaker , the case had been closed (the literal case had been shut) and thus , they solved the mystery . In 1990 , Nielsen appeared as a Frank Drebin character in advertisements in the United Kingdom for Red Rock Cider .

Non @-@ comedic roles after Airplane ! included Prom Night (1980) and Creepshow (1982) , both horror films , and as a dramatic and unsympathetic character in the 1986 comedy Soul Man . His last dramatic role was as Allen Green , a violent client of a prostitute killed in self @-@ defence by Barbra Streisand 's character , Claudia Draper , in Martin Ritt 's courtroom drama Nuts (1987) .

= = = Later comedies = = =

Subsequent to Airplane ! and The Naked Gun , Nielsen portrayed similar styled roles in a number of other films . These mostly emulated the style of The Naked Gun with varying success and often targeted specific films : many were panned by critics and most performed poorly . Repossessed (

1990) and 2001 : A Space Travesty (2001) were parodies of The Exorcist and 2001 : A Space Odyssey , respectively . Both attempted absurd comedy but were poorly received . Even a leading role in a Mel Brooks comic horror , Dracula : Dead and Loving It , failed to generate much box office excitement , although it did gain a following later release to video . Both 1996 's Spy Hard and 1998 's Wrongfully Accused , a parody of James Bond films and The Fugitive , were popular on video but not well received by critics .

His attempt at children 's comedies met additional criticism . Surf Ninjas (1993) and Mr. Magoo (1997) had scathing reviews . Several critics were disappointed that Nielsen 's role in Surf Ninjas was only " an extended cameo " and Chris Hicks recommended that viewers " avoid any comedy that features Leslie Nielsen outside of the Naked Gun series . " Jeff Miller of the Houston Chronicle panned Mr. Magoo , a live action remake of the 1950s cartoon , by saying , " I 'm supposed to suggest how the film might be better but I can 't think of anything to say other than to make the film again . "

Nielsen 's first major success since The Naked Gun came in a supporting role in Scary Movie 3 (2003) . His appearance as President Harris led to a second appearance in its sequel , Scary Movie 4 (2006) . This was the first time Nielsen had reprised a character since Frank Drebin . In one scene , Nielsen appeared almost nude , and one critic referred to the scene as putting " the ' scary ' in Scary Movie 4 . "

= = = Video , stage , and celebrity productions = = =

Nielsen also produced instructional golf videos , which were not presented in a serious style , beginning with 1993 's Bad Golf Made Easier . The videos combined comedy with golf techniques . The series spawned two additional sequels , Bad Golf My Way (1994) and Stupid Little Golf Video (1997) . Nielsen also co @-@ wrote a fictional autobiography titled The Naked Truth . The book portrayed Nielsen as a popular actor with a long history of prestigious films .

In his eighties , Nielsen performed serious roles on screen and stage (such as his one @-@ man theatre show Darrow , in which he played Clarence Darrow) , as well as providing voice @-@ overs and appearances for commercials ; cartoons like Zeroman where he had the leading role / voice ; children 's shows , such as Pumper Pups , which he narrated , in addition to comedic film roles . The sibling relationship with his elder brother , the Honourable Erik Nielsen , a former Deputy Prime Minister of Canada , served as the premise of an HBO mockumentary entitled The Canadian Conspiracy in which Leslie Nielsen appeared , along with other prominent Canadian @-@ born media personalities . He was a celebrity contestant on CBS 's Gameshow Marathon , where he played The Price Is Right , Let 's Make a Deal , Beat the Clock , and Press Your Luck for charity .

= = = Final acting years = = =

Beginning in February 2007 , Nielsen began playing a small role as a doctor in the humorous yet educational television show Doctor * Ology . The show chronicles real @-@ life medical techniques and technology , on the Discovery Channel . Nielsen said : " There are any number of things that you think about when you ponder if you hadn 't been an actor , what would you be , and I 've always said I 'd like to be an astronaut or a doctor . I have such admiration for doctors . I just don 't know how you go around to thank them enough for coming up with the world 's most remarkable new discoveries . "

In 2007 , Nielsen starred in the drama Music Within . In 2008 , he portrayed a version of Uncle Ben for Superhero Movie , a spoof of superhero films . He then appeared in the 2008 parody An American Carol , which David Zucker directed , produced and co @-@ wrote . He appeared in the 2009 parody Stan Helsing . Nielsen portrayed the Doctor in the Spanish horror comedy Spanish Movie , a spoof comedy like Scary Movie , but making fun of popular Spanish films .

Nielsen appeared in more than 100 films and 1 @,@ 500 television episodes , portraying more than 220 characters .

== Personal life ==

Nielsen married four times : nightclub singer Monica Boyar (1950 ? 1956) , Alisande Ullman (1958 ? 1973) , Brooks Oliver (1981 ? 1983) and Barbaree Earl (2001 ? 2010) . Nielsen had two daughters from his second marriage , Maura and Thea Nielsen .

Nielsen often played golf . He joked , " I have no goals or ambition . I do , however , wish to work enough to maintain whatever celebrity status I have so that they will continue to invite me to golf tournaments . " His interest in the sport led him to comedic instructional films .

Nielsen was a practical joker , and known for pranking people with a portable hand @-@ controlled fart machine : " he always had that fart machine with him . " His epitaph read : " Let ' er rip " , a final reference to his favourite practical joke .

Nielsen was legally deaf and wore hearing aids for most of his life . Because of this impairment , he supported the Better Hearing Institute . Later in life , Nielsen had knee osteoarthritis . He participated in an educational video from The Arthritis Research Centre of Canada (ARC) , demonstrating the physical examination of a patient with knee osteoarthritis .

== Death ==

In November 2010 , Nielsen was admitted to a Fort Lauderdale , Florida , hospital with pneumonia . On 28 November , Doug Nielsen , Nielsen 's nephew , told the CJOB radio station that 84 @-@ year @-@ old Nielsen had died in his sleep from pneumonia around 5 : 30 pm EST surrounded by family and friends . He was interred in Fort Lauderdale 's Evergreen Cemetery . As a final bit of humor , Nielsen chose " Let ' er rip " as his epitaph .

== Achievements ==

Among his awards , in 1995 Nielsen received UCLA 's Jack Benny Award . In 1988 , he became the 1,884th personality to receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6541 Hollywood Blvd . In 2001 he was inducted into Canada 's Walk of Fame . The following year he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada , although he was also a naturalized US citizen . With his American status , he maintained his Canadian heritage : " There 's no way you can be a Canadian and think you can lose it ... Canadians are a goodly group . They are very aware of caring and helping . " On 19 May 2005 , during the centennial gala of his birth province , Saskatchewan , Leslie Nielsen was introduced to HM Queen Elizabeth II .

In 1997 , a Golden Palm Star on the Palm Springs , California , Walk of Stars was dedicated to him .

On 20 February 2002 , Nielsen was named an honorary citizen of West Virginia and an Ambassador of Mountain State Goodwill . Nielsen visited the state many times to speak and visit friends . In 2003 , in honour of Nielsen , Grant MacEwan College named its school of communications after him . Also in 2003 , the Alliance of Canadian Cinema , Television and Radio Artists awarded him the ACTRA Award of Excellence .

== Filmography ==

== Films ==

== Television ==

== Video ==

1993 : Bad Golf Made Easier

1994 : Bad Golf My Way

1997 : Stupid Little Golf Video

1997 : National Geographic Video : The Savage Garden

Nielsen also appeared in a promotional video for Layman Allen 's mathematics game called " Equations " and in the Seaworld San Antonio Summer Nights 4 @-@ D show " Pirates 4 @-@ D " .

= = Writings = =

1993 : The Naked Truth

1995 : Leslie Nielsen 's Stupid Little Golf Book with Henry Beard

1996 : Bad Golf My Way with Henry Beard