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Marilyn Monroe: The Final Years

By Keith Badman



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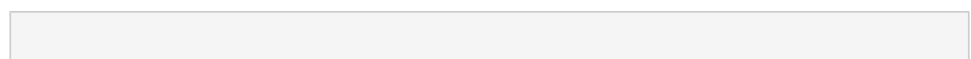
Published for the fiftieth anniversary of her tragic death, this definitive account dispels the rumors and sets the record straight on her last two years

Marilyn Monroe passed away at the age of thirty-six under circumstances that have remained mysterious to this day. *Marilyn Monroe: The Final Years* separates the myths and rumors from the facts as Keith Badman takes readers through the concluding months of 1960 to that fateful day in August 1962.

In this extraordinary book—the product of five years of exhaustive research—the author is both biographer and detective: Badman uncovers long-lost or previously unseen personal records, exclusive interviews, and eyewitness accounts that illuminate the final chapter of Marilyn's life as she navigates weight gain, drug use, and personal turmoil, along with drama on the set of the ill-fated movie *Something's Got to Give*.

Badman dispels popular beliefs, such as her supposed affairs with John and Bobby Kennedy. (Monroe only had a one-night stand with the president at Bing Crosby's house, and never with Bobby.) Readers learn the long-concealed identity of her biological father, who refused Marilyn's attempt to contact him in 1951—and was then repaid with her apathy ten years later when he attempted to contact her. The author also reveals the details of her famous "last Sitting" with photographer Bert Stern (which was *not* her last photo shoot) and describes the horror she endured after being tricked into being institutionalized at the Payne-Whitney Psychiatric Clinic, from which ex-husband Joe DiMaggio had to pull strings to secure her release. Perhaps most shockingly, we learn of the regrettable incident in which a drunken Monroe was sexually exploited by mobsters at a Lake Tahoe hotel co-owned by Frank Sinatra. Finally contrary to the salacious rumors that Marilyn was suicidal or the victim of a murder and cover-up, Badman discloses new information about her final days alive and reveals, in unequivocal detail, evidence that indicates Monroe's death was accidental.

Above it all, Badman pays homage to Monroe by rescuing her final months from the realm of wild and sensationalized allegations popularized by those who sought to gain from them. *Marilyn Monroe: The Final Years* sheds new light on an immortal movie legend.



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Editorial Review

Review

“He painstakingly examines day-to-day events, sorting through fact and myth to uncover the real story.”
?Library Journal

“A meticulously detailed look at the year and a half leading up to Marilyn's death.” *?The Huffington Post*

“Meticulously researched...unlocks the mystery surrounding the final hours of Hollywood's favourite blonde.” *?Sunday Express (UK)*

“Shocking and frank, Badman's work is a piece of investigative journalism worthy of the highest accolades.”
?Record Collector (UK)

About the Author

KEITH BADMAN is the author of several pop culture books, including *The Beach Boys*, *Beatles Off the Record* and *Good Times and Bad Times: The Definitive Diary of the Rolling Stones 1960–1969*.

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MARILYN MONROE (Chapter One)

Prelude--Childhood/Adulthood

Birth to June 1961

At 9.30 on the morning of Tuesday 1 June 1926, in the fortress-like confines of the charity ward of the Los Angeles General Hospital, Dr Herman M. Beerman unwittingly delivered his most famous baby. Originally called Norma Jeane Mortenson, the illegitimate child would later become known as Marilyn Monroe, the world's most celebrated movie star.

Her mother was a 24-year-old motion-picture negative film cutter, Gladys Pearl Monroe Mortenson. Described by her work colleagues as a 'talkative, short, cute blonde' and 'a lot of fun when she wanted to be', at the time of the birth, Gladys was so broke that, to help pay her hospital costs, colleagues at the Consolidated Film Industries, where she worked, were obliged to share her medical expenses. The problems did not end there. According to those who would treat her, Gladys soon developed schizophrenia.

Her family had a history of mental instability. Both of her parents, Otis Elmer Monroe and Della Monroe Grainger, lived out their twilight years in mental institutions, and her brother, Marion, had suffered from a problem best described at the time as paranoid schizophrenia. Though Gladys herself was most likely a manic-depressive, it was not uncommon during the 1930s and 1940s for those suffering from manic depression to be diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenics. Whatever the exact nature of her mother's disorder, Marilyn Monroe naturally came to possess a morbid fear of genetic insanity.

Marilyn's paternity remains a subject of debate to this day. Although the name of Norwegian immigrant

Edward Mortenson, Gladys's second husband (her first being a man named Jasper Baker) was listed as the father on the certificates pertaining to Norma Jeane's birth and Marilyn's marriages to Joe DiMaggio and Arthur Miller, it was never the case. Other men have been suggested as candidates. As Donald Spoto pointed out in his 1993 book, *Marilyn Monroe: The Biography*, these included 'Harry Rooney, a co-worker who was besotted with her; the adoring Clayton MacNamara or, perhaps most likely of all, Raymond Guthrie, a film developer who ardently courted her [Gladys] for months...' Marilyn, however, perhaps wistfully, believed Mortenson to be her father, having been shown a picture of the man as a child and primed 'this is your father'. In fact, however, he was Charles Stanley Gifford, born on Sunday 18 September 1898 in Newport County, Rhode Island.

In her posthumously published 1974 memoir, *My Story*, Marilyn recalled of the man in the picture that 'There was a lively smile in his eyes and he had a thin moustache like Clark Gable', while her mother told her he had been 'killed in an auto accident in New York'. As surviving images prove, however, the man in the picture was evidently not Edward Mortenson, but Gifford, who did bear a strong resemblance to Gable. And her mother was wrong that the man had been killed in a motor accident. Gifford was not killed in a motor accident, Mortenson, however, was. The fateful collision occurred on Tuesday 18 June 1929, at approximately 5pm, and in Ohio rather than New York; Mortenson was riding his motorcycle along the road from Youngstown to Akron and when he tried to overtake a car in front of him, he smashed into a sedan, breaking both of his legs. He fell to the ground unconscious and paralysed. Mortenson passed away just as the ambulance he was travelling in reached the nearby hospital. (To add to the confusion, a second man bearing the name, Martin Edward Mortenson, also entered the scene claiming to be Marilyn's true biological father. When he died of a heart attack on Tuesday 10 February 1981, aged 83, in Riverside, California, a copy of Norma Jeane's birth certificate was found among his possessions.)

The actress's mother had become besotted with the stout, dark-haired Gifford during his stint in charge of the day shift at Consolidated Film Industries in early 1925. Gifford's employment with the motion picture plant Thomas H. Ince Studios in Culver City had recently been terminated and his wife, Lillian Priester, was suing him for divorce. Her claims against him (he associated himself with low-life women, was addicted to narcotic drugs and had beaten her on numerous occasions) made it abundantly clear what kind of man he was. In an attempt to rebuild his life and earn some useful dollars, Gifford took a post at Consolidated as a hypo-shooter and developer and, within months, had worked his way up to the position of superintendent of the night crew. By the spring, the pair were having an affair and on Wednesday 6 May, his divorce became final. Twenty days later, on Tuesday 26 May, Gladys walked out on her husband, Mortensen. Her intention was clear to everyone; she had set her sights on becoming the next Mrs Gifford. However, he saw Gladys as just another fling and, by Christmas Eve 1925, had tired of it and promptly fled. But there was a catch: Gladys was now three months pregnant. Norma Jeane would become that child.

The idea of placing Norma Jeane with neighbours Albert and Ida Bolender on Sunday 13 June 1926, just 12 days after the baby's birth, came from Gladys's mother, Della. She had asked the couple, who lived across the road at 215 Rhode Island Avenue in Inglewood, Los Angeles County, to watch over her granddaughter while she travelled to South America to reconcile with her husband.

Contrary to the long-held belief that Gladys totally abandoned her daughter, she actually resided with Norma Jeane at the property and dutifully paid Albert and Ida \$25 a month rent. Della knew Gladys and Norma Jeane would be in good hands and that a visit to them would always be just a short distance away. 'Mrs Baker [i.e. Gladys] was with me,' Ida confirmed in 1956. 'She stayed in Hollywood when working nights as a negative cutter, and stayed with me while working days...She [Norma Jeane] was never neglected and always dressed nicely. Her mother supported her all the time and bought all her clothes.'

Incontestable proof that both Gladys and her daughter lived under the Bolenders' roof can be found in an

official census of Inglewood Township, Los Angeles County (enumeration district no. 19). Details of that Rhode Island Avenue house, as registered on Tuesday 1 April 1930, revealed that, besides Gladys and Norma Jeane, the other occupiers of the building were Albert, aged 46, Ida, 42 and their son Lester, 3. (Albert made a mistake when he filled out the form, noting Gladys as being 27 years of age and Norma Jeane as 63.)

In spite of his carefree, unconcerned exterior, Gifford did not (despite what we have been told before) wash his hands of the child. When Norma Jeane was just one or two years old, after learning of the child's placement with the Bolenders, the concerned father actually came forward and tried to adopt her. However, Gladys now despised the man; still smarting at how he had absconded during her pregnancy, she was having none of it and his request was denied.

With the Bolenders ably watching over her child, Gladys returned to work at the Consolidated Film Industries. Each Saturday she would take her child on an outing, usually a walking tour to the streets outside the movie stars' homes in the Hollywood hills. Another of Gladys's favourite journeys was to the recently opened Grauman's Chinese Theater on Hollywood Boulevard, famous for its red-carpet movie premieres. Norma Jeane and her mother would stare down adoringly at the world-famous foot and hand prints captured in cement outside the building. Norma Jeane would intently place her small hands and feet over the imprints.

Despite her mother's warmest intentions to display love and affection to her daughter, however, Norma Jeane would forlornly recall Gladys only as 'the woman with red hair' or 'the pretty woman who never smiled'. She did not regard her as her real mother. In her primary years, she looked upon Ida and Albert as her true parents and would call them 'Mama' and 'Daddy'.

It is intriguing to see how often Monroe's childhood has been portrayed in despondent, dull, quite depressing tones, insisting that she was, for the better part of her young life, unloved, unpopular and poor. The truth is that, from birth until she was eight years old, Norma Jeane lived in only one place, the cosy yet austere, old-fashioned six-room home in the middle-class city of Inglewood belonging to the devoutly Catholic Albert and Ida Bolender. Even as far back as 1952, Hollywood spokespeople were dramatising Marilyn's upbringing at the Bolenders' by saying that she was pounded with religious precepts that dictated damnation for her slightest transgression, brainwashed into thinking that 'drinking, smoking and dancing was the works of the devil', made to promise she'd never drink or swear, ordered to scrub and polish the house's floors and forced to attend church several times a week. True, the young girl did attend church with the Bolenders, but quite happily.

However, some truly disturbing incidents did happen to her in that time. First, in July 1927, her grandmother Della attempted to smother her with a pillow. For no perceptible reason, she walked over to the Bolenders' home in a state of complete undress, smashed her way in through the glass in the front door and made an unprovoked attack on the young child. The ramifications from the incident were immense. A few weeks later, on Thursday 4 August, she was committed to Norwalk's Metropolitan State Hospital where, just 19 days afterwards, she died of a heart attack. She was found to be suffering from manic-depressive psychosis.

The second incident came when Gladys attempted to murder her. 'Her mother tried to kill her three times,' Marilyn's third husband, playwright Arthur Miller, shockingly revealed in an April 1968 interview for the BBC. 'Her mother was quite mad.' Throughout most of her life, Marilyn often remarked how she could still vividly recall these horrific encounters.

Due to the highly dependable statements of both Miller and the Bolenders, I believe these events did happen; most of...

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