



# Judy Holliday: An Intimate Life Story

*Gary Carey*

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## **Judy Holliday: An Intimate Life Story** Gary Carey

The wit, intelligence, and grace of Judy Holliday's acting mark her as one of the great comediennes of the Forties and Fifties. In this intimate biography, Gary Carey traces the threads of a fascinating but tragically short life and career. What emerges is a portrait of a woman of deep uncertainties and profound ambivalence who found in herself the strength, the drive, and the courage to succeed. Despite a number of professional setbacks, Holliday's career was remarkably successful: immediate praise for her part as one of the satiric Revuers (along with Adolph Green and Betty Comden); an Oscar for *Born Yesterday*; and critical acclaim for nearly every one of her stage and screen performances. But Holliday never wanted to be an actress. Throughout her career she was haunted by insecurities about her physical appearance and her talent. She never felt comfortable with the gossip and glamour of Hollywood, yet she managed to hold her own against its impersonal, sometimes vicious, ways. The daughter of Russian-Jewish immigrants, Holliday remained politically conscious throughout her life and was interrogated and blacklisted as a Communist sympathizer during the Hollywood witch-hunts in the Fifties. Holliday sought little more than a life of stability and quiet intelligence. And yet she was never to fully extricate herself from a complicated web of relationships that included an overprotective mother, an early lesbian lover, and a number of unsuccessful alliances—a failed marriage to clarinetist David Oppenheim; liaisons with Nicholas Ray and Peter Lawford; a passionate, euphoric interlude with Sydney Chaplin, her handsome leading man in *The Bells Are Ringing*; and a final, poignant affair with jazz musician Gerry Mulligan. In 1965, at the age of 44, Holliday died of cancer. The strength and courage with which she faced her death—as she had the many other difficulties in her life—had a quality of tragedy and triumph that seemed to be Holliday's hallmark.

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