

# Cultural Daily

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## Kirk and Anne Douglas

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, May 3rd, 2017

Married 63 years since May 1954, Kirk Douglas and his second wife Anne just published a book of the love letters they exchanged in the 1950s and 60s after meeting in Paris in 1953, with a running commentary from both about their life together until the present, which they call their “golden hours.” Kirk celebrated his 100th birthday last December 16, and Anne turned 98 on April 23.



Kirk Douglas, photo © Elisa Leonelli 1986

I had interviewed the legendary movie star several times during my work as a film journalist, and had read his 1988 autobiography *The Ragman's Son*, so I was familiar with his accomplishments as an actor and producer of movies like *Paths of Glory*, *Spartacus*, *Gunfight at the OK Corral*, *Lonely Are the Brave*, *Seven Days in May*.

You may read the [Kirk Douglas profile](#) I wrote for the Hollywood Foreign Press website as part of a series about classic movie stars, which includes [Burt Lancaster](#), his friend and frequent costar.

But it was quite interesting to hear Anne's side of the story in her own words, understand the thought process of a smart European woman who cherished her role of wife and mother in glamorous Hollywood, with friends like Tony Curtis, Elizabeth Taylor, Gregory Peck, John Wayne, Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra. Her husband writes: “Looking back at our many decades together from your viewpoint has been a revelation.”



[Hannelore Marx](#) was born in Hanover, Germany, and raised in a wealthy household, contrary to the impoverished upbringing of her future husband, the only son among six daughters of Russian Jewish immigrants. She lived in Switzerland then in Belgium, where she married Albert Buydens, before moving to Nazi-occupied Paris during World War II.

It was director Anatole Litvak who asked her to work as a publicist on the movie *Act of Love* filmed in Paris, then producers Dino De Laurentiis and Carlo Ponti who hired her for *Ulysses* filmed in Rome. At the time Douglas, already divorced from first wife Diana, with whom he had two sons, Michael and Joel, was engaged to Italian actress Anna Maria Pierangeli, his 20-year-old costar in *The Story of Three Loves* (they played trapeze artists in the segment *Equilibrium*). Kirk thought Anne was sophisticated, efficient, with a wicked sense of humor; she became his confidant and lover. After they married a year later, she gave birth to their sons, Peter in 1955 and Eric in 1958. Kirk's pet name for Anne was “Stolz,” the German word for proud, stubborn. She called Kirk her “awful wedded husband” (having misunderstood the word lawful at their Las Vegas

wedding).

The couple faced hardships together, from her breast cancer to the tragedy of their bipolar son Eric's drug overdose in 2004. After a stroke in 1996 left Kirk with a speech-impairment, they remained active through the charity work of their [Douglas Foundation](#). He says: "What else do you do with your money? You give it away to people who need it. You help them. It feels so good, it's selfish."

This centenarian has not lost his wit and *joie de vivre*, which he credits to his loyal and nonsense wife Anne.

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