

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Shirley MacLaine

Elisa Leonelli · Monday, January 5th, 2026

Shirley MacLaine celebrated her 90th birthday in 2024 by publishing a book: *The Wall of Life*. 150 photographs about her “wonderful life” that were grouped as montages on a wall of her Malibu home.



Shirley MacLaine © Elisa Leonelli 1983

This amazing actress made her film debut at age 20 in *The Trouble with Harry* (1955) by Alfred Hitchcock, earning a Golden Globe as Star of Tomorrow.

Click [here](#) to see her win another Globe as Most Versatile Actress of 1958 for *Some Came Running* by Vincent Minnelli, where I list her 4 Golden Globes as Best Actress out of 20 nominations, by the journalists of the Hollywood Foreign Press, and her Cecil B. DeMille award in 1998.

The first time I interviewed Shirley MacLaine was in 1983, about *Terms of Endearment* by James Brooks, and I also photographed her.



Shirley MacLaine © Elisa Leonelli 1983

Click [here](#) for a Golden Globe Moment from 1984 when MacLaine won as Best Actress for *Terms of Endearment*, posing with Barbra Streisand, a double winner for *Yentl*.

In 1988, I interviewed Shirley MacLaine about *Madame Souzatska* by John Schlesinger. My text was published in the April 1989 issue of *Marie Claire* Italy.



Elisa Leonelli, Shirley MacLaine © HFPA 1988

In 1990, I traveled to Las Vegas for press interviews about *Postcards from the Edge* directed by Mike Nichols from a screenplay by Carrie Fisher, where Shirley MacLaine costarred with Meryl Streep. My article was published in *CIAK*, the Italian film monthly, when I was their Los Angeles Correspondent from 1987 to 1994.

Click [here](#) to see MacLaine when she presented Jack Lemmon with his Cecil B. DeMille in 1991, along with Walter Matthau. She had co-starred in Lemmon in *The Apartment* (1960) and *Irma La Douce* (1963) both directed by Billy Wilder.



Elisa Leonelli, Shirley MacLaine © HFPA 1992

In 1992, I interviewed MacLaine about *Used People* by Beeban Kidron, where she co-starred with *Marcello Mastroianni*. My text was published in *VENICE*, Los Angeles Arts and Entertainment Magazine, where I was Film Editor from 1990 to 1999.

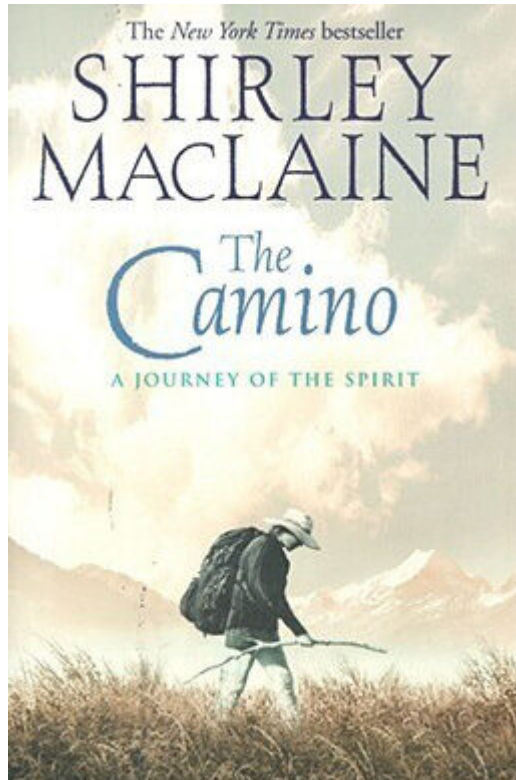
In 1996, I interviewed MacLaine about *Mrs. Winterbourne* and *The Evening Star*. My text was published in *Gioia*, the Italian fashion weekly



Shirley MacLaine © Elisa Leoneli 1989

In 2014, I featured Shirley MacLaine among the classic profiles of 15 legendary movie stars that I wrote for the Golden Globes website, [read it here](#), and included, of course, [Jack Lemmon](#).

I wish to conclude with a hopeful New Year's message for 2026, that we so badly need after an awful 2025, by quoting what Shirley MacLaine said during an exclusive interview in 2000 with the journalists of the Hollywood Foreign Press, about her experience walking the [Camino de Santiago](#) at age 60.



“I did the Camino because that is the real test, I needed to go further within. When you walk nine, ten, sometimes twelve hours a day by yourself, you begin to really experience that internal world much more fully. You have to carry everything with you and it’s heavy. Seven pounds is what my backpack weighed, but it had become two tons. You realize what a burden material possessions can be, and that changed me. When I got back I sold my place in Malibu, now I am renting from the new owner.

“I reached the point in my life where success is wonderful and certainly longevity is, but what really matters is the internal journey, who you are inside. I noticed that in this economy and in the western world in general, there has been so much affluence and so much unhappiness.

“The main thing is to keep a foot in both worlds, the world of entertainment, communication, politics, and the spiritual world. There is a huge dot-com revolution going on electronically that tends to isolate people. They are addicted to being on the Internet, the sense of having a real experience with the screen. But the technology can also be spiritualized.

“The more I grow, the more I learn, the more I realize that I don’t know, and that happened to me on the Camino. So what I did when I got back, I thought about it for a long while, then I wrote a book (*The Camino: A Journey of the Spirit*) and put up a [website](#). In just a few weeks I have gotten over 4 and a half million hits.”

[Watch here](#) Shirley talk to Oprah about walking the Camino.

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