

I'm Dick Williams.

Welcome to Lovely Ladies of the Silver Screen.  
The first presentation is Hedy Lamarr.

If you would like to learn more about her, the recent documentary "Bombshell" available on Amazon Prime is an excellent source. [1]

Hedy Lamarr (born in 1914–died in 2000) was generally considered the most beautiful woman in the world for much of the 20th century even though we all know that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

But she is famous for having said, "every girl can be glamorous; all she has to do is stand still and look stupid."

All of her life she wanted to make a mark on the world and not be judged by her beauty alone.

She wished to be seen for who she really was—a talented inventor who patented the basic technology for the wifi and Bluetooth of today.

Hedy began trying to invent at the age of five when she took a music box apart and put it back together correctly.

Her father Emile Kiesler [2] was a bank executive in Vienna but had a genuine interest in technology. When Hedwig Kiesler (Hedy's name at the time) went on frequent walks at an early age with her father, he would explain to her how trolleys and other electrical devices worked. She learned to associate invention with her father whom she adored. Hedy was not as close with her mother Gertrude [3] who was more strict in her approach to child-rearing.

Both of her parents were cultured and assimilated Jews in Vienna, having achieved wealth and status. They were not religious in any sense of the word and never discussed with her the fact that she was Jewish.

They frequently took Hedy [4], who was their only child, to the opera and the theater. At that time, Vienna had a population of two million people.

Hedy's favorite subject in school was chemistry.

By the age of 16, she was so conscious of her beauty, that she went to a photographer and had her picture taken, both with and without clothing. She also decided to walk into the largest film studio in Vienna and seek a job. Within a few days she was appearing as a walk-on.

The next year the empresario Max Reinhardt [5] put her on stage in a leading role.

Hedy's first film "Ecstasy" [6] made her famous because of a nude scene with her swimming in a lake and a bedroom scene in which she appeared to have an orgasm. The film was considered so scandalous that it was denounced by the Pope.

Hedy was under the age of 18 when the film was made.

Her first husband Friedrich Mandl [7] was an immensely wealthy munitions tycoon who was the Henry Ford of Austria. He was 14 years older than Hedy. Only 19 at the time of their marriage, she was the perfect trophy wife.

Although Mandl was Jewish, he became allied with the Nazis in order to sell them weaponry.

Hedy and Friedrich had a country house with 25 guestrooms. He soon became jealous and paranoid about the effect his wife's beauty had on other people. He was nervous about her having an affair and tried unsuccessfully to buy up all of the prints of "Ecstasy".

In 1937, Hitler annexed Austria and imposed severe restrictions on Jews, banning "Ecstasy" because he considered Hedy to be Jewish.

A few months later her beloved father died suddenly of a heart attack, probably caused by the stress of Hitler's annexation of Austria.

The combination of the Nazi takeover of Austria and her increasingly unhappy marriage caused Hedy to literally run away from her husband in the middle of a dinner party in 1937 and escape

with her jewelry and furs to England where she had friends.

She went to an MGM movie in London and decided to try to become a screen actress in America though she spoke no English at the time.

A friend took Hedy to a hotel where Louis B. Mayer [8] of MGM was staying with his wife. He had come to London to buy up at a cheap price actors and actresses who were trying to escape Nazi Germany.

After a meeting in his room, Mayer made Hedy a lowball offer of \$125 per week and told her she would have to keep her clothes on. She turned him down and immediately booked passage on the ship on which he and his wife were sailing back to America.

The first night on the ship she walked through the dining room past the table where Mayer was sitting along with Douglas Fairbanks Jr. The eyes of every man in the room followed her. Mayer knew then that he had to have her for MGM and increased his original offer of \$125 per week to \$500 per week, four times as much.

When Hedy signed her contract, Mayer told her that she would have to change her name. His wife came up with the name Hedy Lamarr.

Her first challenge was to learn to speak English

When she stepped off the ship in New York, she was already a celebrity as the new star hired by MGM.

At first she had a major problem getting cast in any movies, but then one night she went to a

party and met Charles Boyer who was so smitten that he said to her, “Can you be in my movie?” She replied that her English was not good enough, but he told her not to worry. He promised to hold her hand throughout the entire movie. Their film “Algiers” [9] made Hedy a star instantly in 1938. She was suddenly on the cover of all the movie magazines.

Over the next few years Hedy was romantically involved with many male movie stars and even the young Jack Kennedy.

Her second husband was Gene Markey [10] whom she married in 1939. She could've married anyone, but surprisingly chose a portly producer with whom she was madly in love because he reminded her of her father. He also promised that he would write screenplays for her.

They adopted a child, James Lamarr Markey [11]. Within months after the adoption, Hedy's new husband began playing around with other actresses. She was heartbroken. They were divorced in October 1940.

Only a year after her success in "Algiers," she became terribly unhappy with the films that she did for MGM because of the bad scripts.

She convinced Louis B. Mayer to give her a part, though a small part, in "Boomtown" which became a success and resuscitated her career in 1940.

Despite working long hours in the studio making films, at night she would go home and work on her inventions. She dated Howard Hughes who gave her equipment to use for her inventions. She was fascinated by his factories and

airplanes but called him the worst lover she ever had.

With the outbreak of the war, Mayer ordered all of his stars not to divulge their religious backgrounds. As a result, Hedy told her children that they were not Jewish when they asked her.

Her manicurist was a Jewish woman who had escaped from Europe and sailed to America. She told Hedy how frightened everyone on the ship was that they would be torpedoed.

Hedy's mother arranged to escape from Austria and got as far as London.

One day in the summer of 1940 a German submarine torpedoed a shipload of children on their way from England to America, and all of them died. Hedy was terribly distressed.

Hedy determined to do something to help win the war even though America was not yet involved. Her idea was to create a radio-controlled torpedo to attack the German submarines. The problem was to find a way to prevent the enemy from jamming the frequency used to control the torpedo.

Radio waves use a particular frequency defined with a numerical value such as “89.1 on your dial.” The frequency can be determined quickly and jammed with static. This problem needed to be solved in order to create an effective radio-controlled torpedo or bomb.

While working toward a solution, Hedy went to dinner with a famous composer of modern avant-garde music. His name was George Antheil [12]. The reason for the dinner was not to discuss the torpedo problem, however.

Antheil was engaged in scientific studies as well as writing music. His specific scientific field was endocrinology, and Hedy wanted information about having breast enlargement.

During the course of their dinner, both of them discovered a mutual interest in science and decided to work together on the torpedo problem.

She chose him because he had experience working in the munitions field. In addition, she recalled discussions that she had overheard involving her first husband who was a munitions manufacturer.

The solution (called frequency-hopping) was for the sender to make split-second frequency changes according to an arbitrary and non-recurring pattern shared with the receiver so that both the sender and the receiver could

synchronize their frequency changes. The system would utilize a punch tape to do the frequency-hopping. Hedy alone came up with the idea of frequency-hopping, but both she and George contributed toward its implementation.

In December of 1940, they offered the solution to a committee of scientists appointed by the United States Government. The committee thanked them and turned it over to the Navy which ignored the concept but classified it as top secret over the next 40 years.

The Navy told Hedy that she could contribute more to the war effort by helping to sell war bonds which she did with great success.

Frequency-hopping would have allowed torpedoes to be guided from airplanes.

The frequency-hopping patent [13] was issued in 1942 jointly in the names of Hedy and George.

Frequency-hopping is the basis of modern technology such as cordless phones, cell phones (wifi and Bluetooth), GPS, satellite communication and guided missiles, but Hedy and George never realized a cent from their patent nor was there any recognition of their contribution until 1997 when she was 82 years old.

The reason is that the Navy's classification of the technology as secret prevented them from renewing the patent when it expired in 1959. George died that year of a heart attack.

Meanwhile, the Navy permitted its contractors to use the frequency-hopping technology without any compensation to Hedy and George.

Hedy's third husband, whom she married in 1943, was John Loder [14]. He was a British actor, age 45, and she was 27. They made one movie together.

Hedy's second child Denice Loder [15] was born in 1945, and her third child Anthony Loder [16] was born in 1947, three months before she divorced John Loder.

In 1950, her career had stalled again when her agent called and mentioned a new movie "Samson and Delilah" [17] being made by Cecil B. DeMille. She called DeMille and said "I am Delilah." The film was a huge success and rejuvenated Hedy's career. It was the second highest grossing film of the decade, second only to "Gone With the Wind."

Then she decided to produce her own biblical epic in Italy. It bombed, however, and she wound up without any money, her career once again at a dead end.

Hedy married her fourth husband Ernest Stauffer [18] in 1951 and her fifth husband Howard Lee [19] in 1953.

Lee was a wealthy Texas oil man from Houston, but she was again a trophy wife, living in Texas with nothing to do. They went to Aspen to ski. She fell in love with the town and convinced Lee to buy acreage nearby. She developed the ski lodge long before Aspen became famous.

Eventually, however, Hedy ended up filing for divorce. Right before the divorce hearing, her 11-year-old child was critically injured in a car accident. When she was called to testify in the

divorce case, she sent her body double. The judge was infuriated and awarded her almost nothing in the divorce decree. Her husband got the Aspen property. She was emotionally devastated and had a nervous breakdown.

As a result, Hedy soon became addicted to methamphetamines and was arrested for shoplifting.

Hedy married Lewis Boies [20], her sixth husband, in 1963. But it became impossible for her to live up to her image as she grew older. She had begun having plastic surgery in her late 40s.

As she got older, Hedy had several botched face lifts. [21] She became a recluse but kept inventing until her death in 2000 at age 85. Some examples of her inventions are a new

kind of stop light and a modification to the Concorde supersonic aircraft.

Although her career was based on her beautiful face, it proved to be her curse because no one gave her credit for her intelligence. She said that she never knew whether men loved her or just her face.

After her death in 2000, her remains were carried back to Austria by her children and scattered in the Vienna Woods.