

*The Whole Truth  
and Nothing But*

*HEDDA HOPPER  
and  
JAMES BROUGH*

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## **DEDICATION**

*To my son, Bill, who never took  
any sass from his mother  
and never gave her any.*

## THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT

I'm told that when you write a book with a title like this, you must let your readers know something about your life. Well, I was born into the home of David and Margaret Furry, one of nine children. Seven of us grew up. Three of us are still here, including my sister Margaret and brother Edgar, who played a good game of football when he attended Lafayette quite a while back.

I first saw the light of day in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, a beautiful suburb of Altoona, which used to live off the Pennsylvania Railroad and its affiliates. Since railroads have fallen on lean and hungry years, I don't know what's feeding the place today.

My mother, an angel on earth whom I worshiped, named me Elda, from a story she was reading at the time. Years later, after I'd married DeWolf Hopper, a numerologist changed Elda to Hedda. My husband, Wolfie, was much older than my father and had been married four times before. The wives' names all sounded pretty much the same: Ella, Ida, Edna, and Nella. His memory wasn't as sharp as it had been, and he couldn't always remember that I was Elda.

As time went on, this started to irk me, so the numerologist came up with *Hedda* Hopper. I asked how much. "Ten dollars." That's exactly how it happened; it changed my whole life. It was the best

bargain I ever made. Wolfie never forgot it, and I've never regretted it.

My sister Margaret was my father's pet. He and I didn't get on well. He thought women should be the workers; I believed my brothers should share the burden. Mother was ill for six years after Margaret's birth, and I took on her duties as well as my own, since my older sister Dora had married. I had to catch a brother by the scruff of the neck to get any help, but they all helped themselves three times a day to the meals I prepared. I also did the washing, ironing, cleaning, and helped Dad in his butcher shop.

When I couldn't take it any more, I ran away—to an uncle in New York. I found a stage door that was open, walked in, and got a job in a chorus, which started a career.

My family now consists of my son Bill, who plays Paul Drake on the "Perry Mason" TV show without any help from me. When he went off to war, he'd already attained stature as an actor. On his return—with a medal for valor which I've never seen—not one soul in the motion-picture industry offered him a job. Hell would have frozen over before I'd have asked anyone for help for a member of my family.

So Bill went to work selling automobiles for "Madman" Muntz. One day he woke up to the fact that he was an actor, got himself a part with director Bill Wellman in *The High and the Mighty*—and asked Wellman not to tell anybody who his mother was. Bill has a beautiful daughter, Joan, who'll be sixteen next birthday.

I don't like to dwell on death, but when you reach my age (and I'm still not telling) you realize it's inevitable. I've left instructions for cremation—no ceremony—with my ashes sent to an undertaking

cousin, Kenton R. Miller, of Martinsburg, Pennsylvania. I'd wanted a friend to scatter them over the Pacific from a plane, but California law forbids that. You have to buy a plot.

A salesman from Forest Lawn told me they'd opened a new section and I could rest in peace next to Mary Pickford for a mere \$42,000. "What do I get for that?" I asked.

"Well, a grave, picket fence, and a golden key for the gate."

"How do you figure I could use it?"

"Oh, Miss Hopper, that's for the loved ones who will mourn you."

That's when I decided on my cousin.

## *One*

I knew Elizabeth Taylor was about to dump Eddie Fisher in favor of Richard Burton soon after *Cleopatra* started filming in Rome. Because in forty years in Hollywood I've told the truth—though sometimes only in part for the sake of shielding someone or other—I wrote the story. This was in February 1962, one week before the news burst like a bomb on the world's front pages.

But Elizabeth, Burton, and I have something in common: Martin Gang, a topnotch attorney, has us as clients. He saw my column, as usual, before it appeared, and came on the telephone in a hurry. "Oh, you couldn't print that," he said. "It would be very embarrassing for me to sue you, since I represent all three."

I was in Hollywood at the time, not in Rome, so I was wanting the firsthand information, the personal testimony, which would be important in self-defense. I deferred to his judgment—and kicked myself for doing it when the news from the Appian Way began to sizzle.

I've known Elizabeth since she was nine years old, innocent and lovely as a day in spring. I liked, and pitied, her from the start, when her mother, bursting with ambition, brought her to my house one day to have her sing for me. Mrs. Sara Taylor was an actress from Iowa who had appeared just twice on Broadway before she married Francis Taylor, who worked for his uncle, Howard Young, as a manager of art galleries on both sides of the Atlantic. When World War II came along, she was in raptures to find herself with a

beautiful young daughter, living right next door to Hollywood—her husband came to manage the gallery in the Beverly Hills Hotel.

Sara Taylor had never gotten over Broadway. She wanted to have a glamorous life again through her child. She had the idea at first that Elizabeth could be turned into another Deanna Durbin, who had a glittering name in those days. “Now sing for Miss Hopper,” she commanded her daughter as soon as our introductions were over and we were sitting by the baby grand in my living room.

“Do you play the accompaniment?” I asked. “I can’t.”

“No, but she can sing without any. Elizabeth!”

It struck me as a terrifying thing to ask a little child to do for a stranger. But in a quivering voice, half swooning with fright, this lovely, shy creature with enormous violet eyes piped her way through her song. It was one of the most painful ordeals I’ve ever witnessed.

I remembered seeing the four-room cottage—simple to the point where water had to be heated on the kitchen stove—in which Elizabeth was born. Little Swallows was its name, and it sat in the woods of her godfather, Victor Cazelet; his English estate, Great Swifts, was in Kent. She had a pony there and grew to love animals like her chipmunk, “Nibbles,” which ran up my bare arm when she brought it around on a visit one day. I screamed like a banshee, but Elizabeth was as patronizing as only a schoolgirl can be.

“It’s only a chipmunk; it won’t hurt you,” she promised scornfully.

You couldn’t have wished for a sweeter child. She would certainly have been happier leading that simple life close to woods and wild

things to be tamed, maybe through all her years. But her mother had been bitten by the Broadway bug, and few women recover from that.

Once the family was settled in Hollywood, Mrs. Taylor maneuvered the support of J. Cheever Cowden, a big stockholder in Universal Pictures, to get a contract for her daughter at that studio. Elizabeth was there for one year, but studio chieftains always resent anybody who's brought in over their heads through front-office influence. They made sure the girl got nowhere fast. Her mother tried everything to find her another job, but it was her father who happened to land her at MGM through a chance remark he made to producer Sam Marx when they were patrolling their beat together as fellow air-raid wardens. She was given a bit in *Lassie Come Home*, then blossomed in *National Velvet* with Mickey Rooney.

I remember the day she cinched in her belt, which showed her charms to perfection, and Mickey turned to me and said: "Why, she is a woman."

"She is fourteen," I replied. He started toward her. I caught him by the seat of the pants. "Lay a hand on her, and you will have to answer to me. She is a child."

He looked hard at me and said, "I believe you would beat me up."

"I sure would."

Victor Cazelet, on a wartime mission for the British Government to New York, wanted desperately to get to California to see the godchild he adored. Though he was a millionaire in his homeland, strict currency controls meant that he hadn't any dollars to pay the

fare. He was staying as a house guest of Mrs. Ogden Reid, owner of the New York *Herald Tribune* in those days, but he had qualms about borrowing from her.

When he telephoned me, I had what I thought was a brain wave: “What about Victor Sassoon? He’s rich as Croesus, and he’s holed up through the war at the Garden of Allah.” I wanted to call him at that exotic sanctuary on the Sunset Strip, where the likes of Scott Fitzgerald, Robert Benchley, and Humphrey Bogart used to frolic before it was demolished to make way for Bart Lytton’s bank.

“He doesn’t do anything for anybody,” Victor warned me, but I couldn’t be convinced until I spoke to Sassoon myself. Lend Cazelet dollars just to visit his godchild? “Certainly not,” growled the old tightwad. “He’s got plenty of money of his own.”

So I booked Victor into the Ebell Theatre in Los Angeles to give a lecture to earn his passage money west. He stayed with the Taylors for a week, which was the last he saw of Elizabeth. Several months later the Nazis shot down the plane he was in, believing that Winston Churchill was aboard. They were halfway right. Victor was on a mission for his friend Winston Churchill.

I remember Elizabeth visiting my house with Jean Simmons when she was on her way back from the South Seas and the filming there of *Blue Lagoon*. They sat together on the long settee in the den, bright as birds and chattering nineteen to the dozen. I thought I had never seen two more beautiful young girls.

As the years went by, I saw Elizabeth through many romances and four marriages, starting with Nicky Hilton. He was a boy, and I don’t believe he’d had too much experience. On their European honeymoon he left her too much alone, though everyone wanted to

meet his beautiful bride. When she came home, she took a second-story apartment in Westwood with a back entrance on an alley. Before she had a chance to sort out what had happened to her, the parade of suitors began—married men, stars. Did any of them love her and try to help? No. They used her. I'm making no excuses for her, but I'm trying to be objective.

Then she was put into another picture. She was exhausted from working too hard and too fast in the rat race on the sound stages. She was swamped with advice from everybody. She couldn't tell true from false. Thus it went from one man to another, one picture to another, until she fell in love with Michael Wilding, who was twenty years older than she. Was she unconsciously looking for a strong father? She loved her own, but he didn't stand up to his wife.

When I spoke to her about Michael, she exclaimed, "I love him, I love him, I love him."

"You don't know what love is. You don't know what you're talking about. He's sophisticated, he's gracious, but I beg you not to marry him."

She didn't listen then or later. She drove Wilding into marriage. "I *am* too old for you," he'd argue. "It will never last, Elizabeth."

"I love you, and you're going to marry me, that's all," she would say.

Then Mike left for England and Liz followed him. From that marriage came two sons, Michael and Christopher. After each birth she had to go to work too soon. Before she could face the cameras, she had to take off pounds in a hurry, just as Judy Garland did, and it weakened her health.

Mike was given a contract at Metro, her studio, but when it ran out it wasn't renewed. During this time she bought two homes, the second because the first wasn't big enough for two children, a nurse, and Mike's eighty-six-year-old father, whom she brought over from England to stay with them. The studio paid for both houses, deducting the money from her salary, which was standard practice.

I knew the marriage was over when Mike started to criticize her in public—before strangers, before anyone. She never stopped working. She was a lady, America's queen of queens, who loved her children and was a good mother to them.

She played in *Giant* with Jimmy Dean, whom she respected and loved like a brother. His senseless death shattered her nerves. Her director, George Stevens, was mad about her and had been since she made *A Place in the Sun* for him.

I saw her on her good days and bad. In *Raintree County* and *Suddenly, Last Summer*, she got to know Montgomery Clift and admired him. Then he raced his car down the hill from her home after a drinking bout with Wilding there, ran into a telegraph pole, and nearly died. Elizabeth sped after him, crawled into the wrecked car, and held his head in her lap until the ambulance arrived. Soaked with blood, she rode to the hospital with him and stayed long enough to know that he'd live.

Then along came Michael Todd, who taught her an awful lot about love and living. He was one of the most sophisticated and ruthless men in show business. He had gone through the jungle of Broadway and come out with many scars.

After Mike had made *Around the World in Eighty Days*, he wanted someone to help sell it. Who else but the queen of the movies? I don't think he needed her more than she needed him, but they fell in love, and he taught her everything he knew about sex, good and bad. He proposed to her in the office MGM gave him at the studio when he was shooting *Around the World*. He said: "Elizabeth, I love you, and I'm going to marry you, and from now on you'll know nobody but me." Only he didn't say "know."

They were married in Mexico, and they started one of the craziest, fightingest, most passionate love matches recorded in modern times. She appeared in the newspapers and magazines every day, every issue. Every facet of their lives was exploited for the benefit of love-starved fans. Gold poured into the box office for her pictures and his *Around the World*.

He bought her the world, or as much of it as he could lay hands on: a new jewel or a half dozen of them every Saturday; a plane; a villa in France; dresses by the hundred. Whatever she wanted, she got. He knew he was spoiling her rotten, but he loved to see her face light up when she saw his presents. For the Academy Award show where he expected her to collect an Oscar for *Raintree County*, he bought her a diamond tiara. "Hasn't every girl got one?" he asked blandly. He gave her a Rolls-Royce and a \$92,000 diamond ring.

"Don't spoil her," I told him time and again. "She's impossible enough already."

In return she gave him a daughter. Her pregnancy was heralded like Queen Elizabeth's or Princess Margaret's. She had an operation that almost took her life. She has two vertebrae in her back that came from a bone bank. I didn't know about that until

she told me. The baby arrived, Liza, a dark-eyed witch who at three months could read your mind.

Mike used to say: "If you want to be a millionaire, live like one." For the London opening of his picture, Elizabeth was draped in a ruby-and-diamond necklace, with bracelet and earrings to match. It was an occasion straight out of the Arabian Nights.

In London for all the high jinks, I watched Eddie Fisher's maneuvers to pay court to Elizabeth in the enormous suite at the Dorchester where Mr. and Mrs. Michael Todd were registered. Debbie lingered in the Fisher suite several floors below. I had missed Elizabeth and Mike like the dickens when they left Hollywood in advance. They made me promise I'd be in London with them for the *Around the World* hullabaloo.

When I checked into the hotel, there was a message from Mike inviting me to see them. I unpacked, changed, then went on up to the top floor, which was taken up entirely by their double suite. I happened to walk first into Liz's half. There she sat, bulgingly pregnant in a white lace robe, with her bare feet on a coffee table, drinking Pimm's No. 1 from a pitcher at her side, with the diamond tiara hanging out of a pasteboard box.

I left Elizabeth and went into Mike's suite. He was talking to four of the most prominent newspaper publishers in London about the opening of the picture, and they were laying out the seating of the theater, since royalty would attend. Crawling around the floor were Elizabeth's two sons, picking caviar sandwiches off a low table and stuffing themselves. I gathered the children up, took them back to Liz, and closed the door firmly. Just then Eddie Fisher came in to pay his respects to Liz. He was in and out all the time.

Mike was frantically busy with two spectacular shows to put on, on the screen for his premiere and at Battersea Festival Gardens, where he threw a champagne-and-fun-fair shindig for two thousand people to celebrate his picture, scoring a triumph that gave him every front page in London, except *The Times*.

He gave us plastic raincoats, to save us from the pelting rain, but we didn't use them. We slithered in mud and scooped coins by the fistful from ash cans he'd had filled to provide fares for all the rides. The Duke of Marlborough stood patiently in the rain with Jock Whitney, waiting to climb on a carrousel. I rode around on my painted charger with Ali Khan and Bettina ahead of me and, in back, a gaitered bishop with his wife. Liz wore a Christian Dior gown in ruby red chiffon. The Doug Fairbankses were there, Deborah Kerr, financier Charles Glore. Debbie and Eddie showed up together. And the Duchess of Argyll, classically understating it, observed as the fun began: "I hear that this is going to be just an intimate little gathering for a few friends." The Gilbert Millers, with Cecil Beaton, left before the fireworks. It was too damp for them.

It was one of the few times I saw Mr. and Mrs. Fisher side by side. Every time Mike asked me to the top floor, Eddie would be there but never Debbie; she might just as well have been sitting home in Hollywood.

The pitcher of Pimm's, the white lace robe, bare feet on a coffee table—and Eddie. That was the pattern. Eddie had latched onto Mike. "You're just like a son to me," Mike used to say, sincerely attached to the hero from Philadelphia, happy that Liz had company during her pregnancy.

The first time I'd ever seen Eddie he'd come sauntering into Romanoff's, Beverly Hills, for luncheon surrounded by ten characters who seemed more familiar with punching bags than pianos. "Who in the name of God is that?" I asked my table mate. "And who are those terrible-looking men with him?"

"That's Eddie Fisher; they're his handlers."

"Handlers?" said I. "Is he a prize fighter? I'd heard he was a singer."

I took him to the Fourth of July garden party at the United States Embassy in London a few days after Mike's opening. Jock Whitney, our ambassador then, sent the invitation, and I invited Mike. But he was too busy and suggested his protégé, who was standing by, as usual. We were offered a glass of champagne before leaving, but Eddie declined. "You know I never drink," he told Mike blandly. "Nothing but Coca-Cola."

In my rented Rolls we drove to the embassy. Making our way through the crowds, I introduced Eddie to Jock and Betsy Whitney, who was looking very frail after a recent operation. She and I sat for a few minutes chatting, while Eddie hung around. As we walked away he asked: "Who'd you say those people were?"

"I introduced you to Mr. and Mrs. Jock Whitney."

"Who are they?"

"He just happens to be our Ambassador to the Court of St. James's."

"Oh," said Eddie, "*oh*."

In one of the marquees put up for the occasion I was offered some bourbon and water. “I’d like some champagne,” Eddie told the waiter.

“Sorry, sir, but we’re not serving champagne.”

“Then I’ll take a dry martini.”

“I’m afraid we can’t mix drinks—too many people here today, sir. We can offer you whisky, gin, vodka, or bourbon.”

“Well, then, I’ll have a scotch and soda,” said my nondrinking companion.

As we left he walked over to the U. S. Air Force Band, which was playing there, borrowed the baton, and conducted the orchestra. What some of the London newspapers said the next morning about that bit of ham-handed showmanship would have driven a more sensitive man into a knothole.

Back in Hollywood, Liz started on another picture, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Then came the spring day when the plane, *Lucky Liz*, dived into the desert in New Mexico; the end of Mike Todd was almost the end of her.

She finished the picture like a trouper only weeks later. The following July I flew with her to New York. We sat up aboard the airliner until 3 A.M. talking about the happiness she had known with Mike. She showed me his wedding ring, taken from his finger after death. “I’ll wear it always,” she said. “They’ll have to cut it off my finger before they’ll get it off my hand.”

I took her to the first party she went to after Mike’s death. Though Arthur Loew, Jr., the producer, had her children in his home, she

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