

Virginia Mayo was a doting grandmother to the end

BLONDE bombshell Virginia Mayo spent her final years mending family ties and passed away a happy woman, surrounded by her loving daughter and grandsons.

After months of failing health, the 84-year-old actress — whose memorable performances graced the silver screen in the '40s and '50s — died of pneumonia and heart failure on January 17 in a nursing facility near her home in suburban Los Angeles.

"Virginia was a beautiful person inside and out," a close friend told *The ENQUIRER*. "She was extremely talented, too. When her acting career wound down, she started painting — she just never lost her creative energy.

RECONCILED

"Most importantly, she reconciled with her only child Mary Johnston, and was able to live out her final years happily as a doting grandmother to Mary's three sons."

Born in St. Louis, Virginia landed her first movie role in 1943 and rose to stardom playing opposite such great comics as Danny Kaye in "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" and Bob Hope in "The Princess and the Pirate."

But she also excelled in dramatic roles, playing an amoral wife in the 1946 Oscar-winner "The Best



SCREEN LEGEND Virginia Mayo with her grandson Dillon Johnston.

Years of Our Lives" and in 1949 playing the wife of James Cagney in "White Heat."

In 1947, at the height of her stardom, she married actor Michael O'Shea, and they remained married until his death in 1973.

"Virginia was a true movie star in the 1940s sense of the word," said the friend. "Back then, it wasn't fashionable for stars to be mothers, and Virginia just wasn't all that interested in being a parent. Mary felt that.

"Virginia used to hint to Mary that because of her, she risked losing her 34-24-34 figure — and Mary always felt that her mother resented her. But in Virginia's final years, she and Mary reconciled, and



PROUD PARENTS: Virginia with hubby Michael O'Shea and their daughter Mary.

her grandsons would often visit her. Virginia played her old movies for them.

"And she'd talk about her co-stars. Most of them she didn't care for much — but she loved Ronald Reagan!"

DIED HAPPY

Virginia's last year was difficult because her health was declining due to several minor strokes.

"The Sunday before she died, the doctors knew the end was near and called Mary, who — with her husband and children — went to spend the day at Virginia's bedside," the friend revealed.

"Virginia told them she loved them with all her heart. They were all crying and told her they'd miss her. Virginia died very happy, knowing she was very loved by her daughter and grandchildren."

— ROBIN MIZRAI



1949: Virginia Mayo and James Cagney in "White Heat."



1945: Virginia and Bob Hope share a light moment.



1947: Mayo co-starred with Danny Kaye in "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty."



1949: Mayo with Ronald Reagan in "The Girl from Jones Beach."



VIRGINIA MAYO
1920-2005