

Virginia Weidler

Titles: 44 Sources: 4 Stills: 13

Born: Eagle Rock, California; March 21st 1927

Died: July 1st 1968, of a heart attack

[elsewhere given as 1967]





Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion entry:

"American child actress who usually played a little horror."

"The youngest of six children of Alfred and Margaret Weidler, she was born in Eagle Rock, Calif., March 21, 1927. Her mother had been an opera singer under the name of Margaret Theresa Louise, and she tutored her children in languages. At the age of three, Virginia acted in "MOBY DICK", with John Barrymore, but her real acting career began as one of the Wiggs children, in "MRS WIGGS OF THE CABBAGE PATCH", 1934. Her last picture was "BEST FOOT FORWARD" in 1943. She went East to become a vocalist in night clubs, and appeared in a singing act at Loew's State Theatre in 1943. On Broadway, she played the ingenue in Vina Delmar's "The Rich Full Life", with Judith Evelyn, 1945. She died, with little public notice, July 1, 1968".

Those Endearing Young Charms entry:

"Dark brown hair and brown eyes. Virginia was the daughter of Margaret Weidler, one time grand opera star. As a young girl, Virginia enjoyed acting in and directing home-made plays with her five brothers and sisters. When she was five years old she received a part in a professional play entitled "Autumn Crocus". The part called for a little girl who could speak both French and German. Virginia was a precocious young lady [sic], and since she was able to speak both languages she won the role.

Sitting in on one of her performances was Norman Taurog, a director for Paramount Pictures. She so enchanted Mr Taurog that he hired her to act in his forthcoming movie, "MRS WIGGS OF THE CABBAGE PATCH". The role proved to be a boon to Virginia for it led to her winning a long-term contract with Paramount. She stayed at Paramount for three years, at which time Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer bought her contract.

In the majority of her films, Virginia played the role of a mischievous imp, stalking through the

(35), one of the offsprings in "MOTHER CAREY'S CHICKENS" (38), and the determined young lady in "BAD LITTLE



picture with grim determination and

ANGEL" (40).

ruining more love affairs than a divorce lawyer. She enjoyed the roles she had, and thought it much more fun than playing a sweet little girl. It also gave her an opportunity to be outgoing - something which she was not in real life.

Virginia continued acting for MGM until the mid-40s, when she switched over to the Broadway stage. She died in 1967 at the age of 40."

Great Child Stars entry:

"Virginia Weidler was something of a "lost" child star. She was an appealing little actress who somehow never found the proper screen niche. Paramount originally promoted her as "a pocket-size edition of the machine-gunning Jane Withers". MGM then rescued her from that fate only to forget her in their scramble to promote Judy Garland, Margaret O'Brien, ex-Fox star Shirley Temple, and Elizabeth Taylor. Still, the brunette Virginia left some memorable screen portrayals: the rural miss of "LADDIE"

She was born on March 21, 1927 in Eagle Rock, California. Her father was an architect and her mother a grand opera singer of German descent. The parents squired their brood (three boys and three girls) to all the major studios, hoping their children would have movie careers. A chance for Virginia to appear in "MOBY DICK" (30), in which John Barrymore was to star as Captain Ahab, exploded when the three-year old refused to remove her dress for a scene. The following year she appeared none-too-auspiciously with Warner Baxter in Fox's "SURRENDER" (31). While visiting her brother at work at RKO, she became a last minute replacement as Constance Bennett's niece in "AFTER TONIGHT" (33). Then, because precocious Virginia [sic] knew a little bit of German and French, she played on the West Coast stage with Francis Lederer in "Autumn Crocus". The play turned out to be a good showcase for the six-year old moppet [sic].

Virginia first won ample attention on screen as Europena of "MRS WIGGS AND THE

CABBAGE PATCH" (34). She was a performing gem as the crumb snatcher who continually threatens "I'll hold my breath 'til I turn blue". (Pauline Lord had the title role in this film version and the script had W.C. Fields



"OUT WEST WITH THE HARDYS"
An MGM-TV Release

chased by matrimony-minded Zazu Pitts.) As

a result of this film, Paramount signed Virginia to a contract. Among her chores over the next several years was playing juvenile versions of Ann Harding in **"PETER IBBETSON"** (35) and Louise Campbell in **"MEN WITH WINGS"** (38). Virginia was the catalyst of the shipboard fire in **"SOULS AT SEA"** (37), and a brat in **"SCANDAL STREET"** (38). She did a beautiful imitation of Shirley Temple in **"FRECKLES"** (35), and occasionally had a meaty lead, such as the one in **"GIRL OF THE OZARKS"** (36). After five years at Paramount, the studio executives decided that the maturing Virginia was not really facing a star future, and they dropped her option.

A less determined parent or child might have succumbed to defeat at this ignominy, but Virginia was perseverent. Over at MGM the Culver city executives thought she had potential and signed her in 1938. They immediately

teamed her with Mickey Rooney in **"LOVE IS A HEADACHE"** (38), and that same year put her into an episode of Rooney's, **"OUT WEST WITH THE HARDYS"**. Miss Weidler ably displayed what a scene-stealing prop a lasso could be when handled by a professional such as herself. Metro also loaned her out, and as a result, Virginia landed a worthy role in RKO's **"THE GREAT MAN VOTES"** (39). Garson Kanin directed this well-regarded feature which starred a dissipated but still brilliant John Barrymore.

During the making of **"THE GREAT MAN VOTES"**, Virginia suffered a memorable but terrifying episode when the unpredictable Barrymore felt she was trying to steal a scene from him. As Kanin recently recalls it in his book **"Hollywood"**, " 'The Great Profile' screamed out on set, 'God damn it! What the hell do you think you're doing, you hammy little bitch?' He literally picked her up and hurled her across the soundstage room. Three stagehands dove to catch her and Kanin had to cancel shooting for the remainder of the day. " To Kanin's amazement, both Barrymore and Virginia approached the scene the next morning as if nothing had happened and performed the scene to perfection in one take.

The next four years found Virginia busy on the MGM lot. Mostly she played sisters: Mickey Rooney's in **"YOUNG TOM EDISON"** (40), Katherine Hepburn's in **"THE PHILADELPHIA STORY"** (40), Marsha Hunt's in **"I'LL WAIT FOR YOU"** (41); or, on the other hand, performed as precocious daughters [sic]: Norma Shearer's in **"THE WOMEN"** (39), Mary Nash's in **"GOLD RUSH MAISIE"** (40), and Wallace Beery's in **"BARNACLE BILL"** (41).



Virginia was certainly a game trouper. As she approached the difficult stage of adolescence, she took dancing and singing lessons, hoping to be able to better compete with the likes of Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney, "Baby" June Preisser, and other multi-talented youngsters on the Metro lot. But the professional death toll for Miss Weidler occurred when Louis B Mayer at Metro took up Twentieth Century Fox's cast-off, Miss Shirley Temple. Virginia just could not compare with the flashy, glamorous competition, and in 1943, after "**BEST FOOT FORWARD**" (she made a rather ungainly teenager), she and Metro came to a parting of the ways. By that point MGM was all atwitter with the tiny, Irish-accented little tyke, Margaret O'Brien, the latest child star on the lot.

Like many another washed-up movie star, Virginia thought the solution to her career plight was a try at Broadway. She made her New York stage debut in *The Rich Full Life*, which opened at the John Golden Theatre on Broadway on November 10, 1945. Reviews for the show were none-too-good. The "*New York Times*" labeled her as being "agreeable" at best. The show closed after only twenty-seven performances. Shortly thereafter Virginia retired from show business. Since then she has married and had two sons.

Unfortunately, Virginia Weidler was too well forgotten by the general public and by her fellow performers. When she died at the age of forty on July 1, 1968 of a heart attack, few newspapers ran an obituary of her.

Today, when "**MRS WIGGS OF THE CABBAGE PATCH**" has a re-run on TV, many viewers chuckle at the breath-holding little girl and say "Who is that?" All too few can say "I remember her well - that's Virginia Weidler."

Excerpt from *The M-G-M Story* review of "THE YOUNGEST PROFESSION":

"Teenage movie fans loved "**THE YOUNGEST PROFESSION**": it was all about them, particularly the autograph-hunting kind. It starred Virginia Weidler in one of the last roles of her ten-year career as a no-nonsense child actress..."

FILMOGRAPHY

Year	Age	Title	Role
deb 31	4	SURRENDER	
33	6	AFTER TONIGHT	
34	7	LONG LOST FATHER	
34		STAMBOUL QUEST	
34		MRS WIGGS OF THE CABBAGE PATCH	as Europena
		<i>with George Breakston, Jimmy Butler</i>	
35	8	LADDIE	
		<i>with Jimmy Butler</i>	
35		FRECKLES	
35		THE BIG BROADCAST OF 1936	
		<i>with David Holt</i>	
35		PETER IBBETSON	
		<i>with Dickie Moore</i>	
36	9	TIMOTHY'S QUEST	
		<i>with Dickie Moore, Bennie Bartlett</i>	
36		TROUBLE FOR TWO	
		<i>with David Holt</i>	
36		A GIRL OF THE OZARKS	in title role, Edie Moseley
36		THE BIG BROADCAST OF 1937	
		<i>with David Holt, Billy Lee</i>	
37	10	MAID OF SALEM	
37		OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT	
37		SOULS AT SEA	as Tina
38	11	SCANDAL STREET	
		<i>with Carl "Alfalfa" Switzer</i>	
38		LOVE IS A HEADACHE	
38		MOTHER CAREY'S CHICKENS	
		<i>with Jackie Moran, Donnie Dunagan</i>	
38		MEN WITH WINGS	
		<i>with Billy Cook, Donald O'Connor, Gene Reynolds</i>	
38		TOO HOT TO HANDLE	
38		OUT WEST WITH THE HARDY'S	
39	12	THE GREAT MAN VOTES	
		<i>with Peter Holden, Bennie Bartlett</i>	
39		THE UNDER-PUP	in title role
		<i>with Kenneth "Buddy" Brown, Bill "Butch" Lenhart, Dickie Moore</i>	
39		FIXER DUGAN	
		<i>with Sonny Bupp, Donnie Dunagan</i>	
39		THE ROOKIE COP	
39		THE SPELLBINDER	
39		THE WOMEN	
39		THE LONE WOLF SPY HUNT	
39		BAD LITTLE ANGEL	in title role
		<i>with Gene Reynolds, Mickey Kuhn, Douglas Madore</i>	
40	13	HENRY GOES ARIZONA	
40		YOUNG TOM EDISON	
		<i>with Mickey Rooney, Philip Hurlic</i>	
40		ALL THIS AND HEAVEN TOO	
		<i>with Richard Nichols</i>	
40		GOLD RUSH MAISIE	
		<i>with Scotty Beckett</i>	
40		THE PHILADELPHIA STORY	as Dinah Lord
41	14	I'LL WAIT FOR YOU	
41		BARNACLE BILL	
41		KEEPING COMPANY	
		<i>with Bobby Winkler</i>	
41		BABES ON BROADWAY	
		<i>with Douglas Madore</i>	
42	15	THIS TIME FOR KEEPS	
42		BORN TO SING	
		<i>with Larry Nunn</i>	
42		THE AFFAIRS OF MARTHA	
43	16	THE YOUNGEST PROFESSION	
		<i>with Scotty Beckett, Jean Porter</i>	

@ This filmography is reliably complete