New York, NY - With his wife Heather by his side, the beloved actor TONY RANDALL died quietly in his sleep yesterday evening at NYU Medical Center due to complications from a prolonged illness. He was 84 years old.

Tony was a star on stage and in films, but probably had his most enduring and endearing success on television. A star in five separate television series including "One Man's Family," "Mr. Peepers," "The Tony Randall Show," and "Love, Sidney" he won the hearts and smiles of the world when he starred as the fussbudgitty Felix Unger in "The Odd Couple" opposite his good friend Jack Klugman. The show, which ran from 1970-1975, still airs every day somewhere in the world.

Born Leonard Rosenberg in Tulsa, Oklahoma, February 26, 1920, the son of an art dealer, he graduated from Tulsa Central High School, then enrolled in Northwestern University, where he majored in speech and drama. In New York he studied at Columbia University and the Neighborhood Playhouse with the renowned Sanford Meisner. He also studied movement with Martha Graham and voice with Henri Jacobi.

His Broadway debut was in 1941 in "A Circle of Chalk." Soon thereafter he appeared with Ethel Barrymore in "The Corn is Green" and with Jane Cowl in "Candida," playing the role of Marchbanks. After a short stint as a radio announcer, he was set for Elia Kazan's production of "The Skin of Our Teeth" but, after rehearsing one day, he was called into the Army. He served four years in the Signal Corps, being discharged as a Lieutenant.

After his discharge, he acted and directed in summer stock in Washington, D.C., before moving to New York and a job with Harry Morgan's highly popular radio show. In the theatre came roles with the legendary Katherine Cornell in "Anthony and Cleopatra" and as the stuttering brother in "The Barretts of Wimpole Street." With Lilli Palmer and Sir Cedric Hardwicke, he appeared in Shaw's "Caesar and Cleopatra."
It was the Edward Chodorov comedy, "Oh, Men!, Oh, Women!", which really established him in the theatre. He played Arthur Tanner, the bibulous movie idol (he was also in the Fox film version, but in a different role).

There has been more theatre, too, notably the musical comedy, "Oh, Captain!," based on the successful Alec Guinness film, "The Captain's Paradise," as well as the aforementioned "The Odd Couple," which he frequently toured with his television co-star Jack Klugman, to record-breaking box office receipts. Add a sell-out touring version of "The Music Man," as well as starring in, and sometimes directing, productions at some of the major regional and repertory companies around the country and Canada. And, in 1989, he scored with a rare dramatic theatre role in the original Broadway production of "M. Butterfly." In the Spring and early Summer of 1999, Tony and Jack appeared together in Tom Stoppard's "Rough Crossing" at the Coconut Grove Playhouse in Florida, and in a production of "Damn Yankees" in Houston. Tony also starred as Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* at the Paramount in New York playing 14 performances a week (the only actor in that part to play all the shows).

Also in the theatre, there was Lawrence and Lee's powerful courtroom drama, "Inherit the Wind" starring Paul Muni, based on the famous Scopes trail. Tony's character, that of a cynical reporter, was based on H.L. Menken, a role that propelled him across the country and into mass awareness. After 17 months in the show, he was off to Hollywood and the film version of George Axelrod's "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?" Life Magazine summed up his film work by saying, "Tony Randall is the finest new comedian the movies have found in a couple of decades."

A complete about-face came with the performance of unusual dramatic depth as the desperate, pathetic husband opposite Joanne Woodward in "No Down Payment." But there have been many other notable Randall screen appearances: "Let's Make Love" opposite Marilyn Monroe "The Mating Game" with Debbie Reynolds the trilogy of his Doris Day-Rock Hudson movies, "Pillow Talk," "Send Me No Flowers," and "Lover Come Back," in which his special character becomes one of the dominant elements. He was proud of his many tour-de-force characterizations in the little known "The Seven Faces of Dr. Lao."


In the meantime, television had come into his life. From 1950-52, Randall played Mac on the melodramatic TV serial "One Man's Family." He then went on
to play Harvey Weskit, the brash, over-confident best friend of Robinson Peepers (Wally Cox) in the live sitcom “Mr. Peepers.” In 1970, Randall won the part of Felix Unger in the ABC television version of “The Odd Couple.” Despite low ratings for the series, ABC, then the third-place network, allowed “The Odd Couple” a five season run. In 1975, Randall won an Emmy as lead actor for his role as Felix.

Although the Broadway and film versions of The Odd Couple became established hits with different stars, Randall lent numerous additions to the Felix character. Drawing upon his interest in opera, Randall had Felix become an opera lover. Randall also added the comedic honking noises that accompanied Felix's ever-present sinus attacks. Much like Jack Klugman's close connection to the Oscar Madison role, Randall became synonymous with Unger.

A popular guest on numerous variety shows, Randall was present on two Emmy award winning variety show episodes in 1970 (The Flip Wilson Show) and 1971 (The Sonny and Cher Show). Randall's frequent appearances as a guest on the Tonight Show won him a role playing himself in Martin Scorsese's “King of Comedy” (1983).

He is noted for having more guest appearances than any other actor on “The Tonight Show” with Johnny Carson; as well as with David Letterman (104 appearances); he was on the premiere show of “Late Night with Conan O'Brien” and has also been a frequent guest on “The Larry King Show.”

In 1976, Randall starred in the short-lived CBS sitcom “The Tony Randall Show.” Randall played Walter Franklin, a judge who deliberated over his troubled family as much as he did over the cases presented to him in his mythical Philadelphia courtroom. In 1981, Randall returned to television playing Sidney Shorr in NBC's Love, “Sidney,” a critically-acclaimed yet commercially unsuccessful sitcom canceled in 1983. The series did attract some criticism from the religious and culturally conservative communities. In “Sidney Shorr,” the made-for-television movie which preceded the series, Randall's character was presented as homosexual. In the series his sexuality was not as overt as the movie, but by no means hidden. Despite the hoopla over Ellen DeGeneris “coming out” in her sitcom, Randall was the first to portray an actively gay character on a network sitcom.

Tony Randall achieved his dream with the 1991 launching of his National Actors Theatre, a Broadway and off-Broadway based not-for-profit subscription based company formed to bring the great classical repertoire of the world, with the finest actors, to a theatre that is within reach of all-- from the serious playgoer to students, and to the very young who will have the opportunity to experience, for the first time, the glories of one of our greatest arts. The National Actors Theatre serves as a living library of our national and world theatre, ensuring that classical drama is as vital and immediate today as when it was written.
The Company’s most recent production, its 20th, was in the fall of 2003, when it presented Luigi Pirandello’s “Right You Are” starring Tony Randall, at the Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts at Pace University. It was at the end of this production that Randall entered the hospital for a heart bypass operation. In his over 60 years as a performer, Tony never missed a performance.

In the company's first season, the plays were "The Crucible," "A Little Hotel on the Side" and "The Master Builder." Tony appeared in "A Little Hotel...," and directed the production of "The Master Builder." The second season began with "The Seagull," followed by a Tony Award-nominated production of "Saint Joan," and ending with the screwball comedy "Three Men on a Horse" starring Jack Klugman and Tony Randall. The company's third season opened with the Tony Award-nominated production of "Timon of Athens" with Brian Bedford and was followed by "The Government Inspector" with Tony and Lainie Kazan, and concluded with "The Flowering Peach" with Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson.

In its fourth season, The National Actors Theatre presented the musical comedy "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes." Its fifth season featured Richard Brinsley Sheridan's comedy "The School for Scandal" with Tony playing Sir Peter Teazle, and "Inherit The Wind," starring George C. Scott as Henry Drummond and Charles Durning as Matthew Harrison Brady. "Inherit The Wind" broke box-office records for the company and was hailed by critics. Among the accolades the production received were the Best Revival and Best Actor Award (Scott) from the Outer Critics Circle, a Drama Desk Award for Scott, and the production was nominated for the prestigious Tony Award in the categories of Broadway revival and Best Actor. Tony appeared in the original 1955 production of the play in the role of E.K. Hornbeck, and on a few special evenings recreated his role in the revival. He also played selected performances in the lead role of Henry Drummond. The National Actors Theatre opened its sixth season with an acclaimed production of "The Gin Game" starring Julie Harris and Charles Durning and directed by Charles Nelson Reilly. Tony starred with his good friend Jack Klugman in Neil Simon's "The Sunshine Boys". "Night Must Fall" starring Matthew Broderick, was next; followed by the acclaimed "Judgment At Nuremberg" starring Maximilian Schell, George Grizzard, Michael Hayden, Robert Foxworth, Marthe Keller and Joseph Wiseman. This stirring drama was written by Abby Mann and based on the War Crimes tribunals following the Second World War.

Last season NAT presented a highly praised production of the oldest surviving play in the Western theatre tradition – Aeschylus' “The Persians,” written in 470 B.C. and starring Len Carioy, Roberta Maxwell and Michael Stuhlbarg. Earlier that season, NAT presented the acclaimed "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui" with Mr. Randall, Al Pacino, Steve Buscemi, Dominic Chianese, Billy Crudup, Charles Durning, Paul Giamatti, John Goodman and Chazz Palminteri
In 1991, as a gala black tie benefit for his theatre, Tony brought "The Odd Couple" back to Broadway. Reunited with Jack Klugman and featuring an all-star cast, this production was treated by press and public as one of the outstanding theatre events of the decade. Tony and Jack reprised their roles for two more gala National Actors Theatre benefits. In January 1992, they were again joined by an all-star cast for two one night benefits of "The Odd Couple" in Palm Beach and Los Angeles. In 1995, Jack and Tony toured the U.S., and in the summer of '96 brought Felix and Oscar over to London.

Above all, Tony Randall was an actor of seemingly limitless range. Yes, he could break you up with laughter as the fastidious Felix of "The Odd Couple" or in the Doris Day comedies, but there was also something very human and touching about those baffled characters he has played. And, when he had the opportunity, as in Broadway's "M.Butterfly" or such a movie as "No Down Payment," he created a character of dramatic strength-- with comedy overtones only pointing up the characterization.

"I love classical music with the same passion with which I despise rock 'n roll, stated Tony." For Columbia Records, he provided a stunning narration of "Facade," conducted by Arthur Fiedler. "Facade" is a comical piece consisting of 21 poems written by Edith Sitwell and put to music by Sir William Walton during the 1920's. (It might be noted that Tony recorded two highly successful record albums for Mercury Records. These spoofed the "Mickey Mouse" sound of some of the dance bands of the '30s, and Tony's rendition of "Boo Hoo" may be the most definitive this side of Carmen Lombardo.) He and Jack Klugman also did an album called "The Odd Couple Sings" on London Records. Opera audiences have known him as a regular on Texaco's Opera Quiz and as intermission commentator on TV's "Live from Lincoln Center."

For over three decades, he was the National Chairman of the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation for which he is a tireless worker. But he lends his support and prestige to all manner of causes in which he believes.

A man of many opinions, Randall says, "There's only one thing worse than a man who doesn't have strong likes and dislikes, and that's a man who has strong likes and dislikes without the courage to voice them." Randall has rarely failed to make his opinions known. His anti-smoking campaigns were famous. He has been known to snatch a cigarette from someone like Johnny Carson during a TV appearance. The Carson's and their like not only took it, but respected it. He was also outspoken on the subject of producers and critics who think of him solely as a comic. "I'm an actor," he says. "Any actor skilled in his profession should be able to do comedy parts, but that's where the similarity ends."
After a long, happy marriage of 54 years, Tony's wife, Florence (Gibbs), died in 1992 after a long illness. Tony found love again with actress Heather Harlan, whom he met while she was interning at the National Actors Theatre. The two were married in New York by Mayor Rudolph Guiliani on November 17, 1995. Then on April 11, 1997 Tony and Heather became first time parents to lovely Julia Laurette Randall. On June 15, 1998, Tony and Heather became parents again with young Jefferson Salvini Randall making his debut.