

Richard Todd, Dashing Actor, Dies at 90

By MARGALIT FOX

Richard Todd, an Oscar-nominated actor best known for war dramas like "The Hasty Heart," "The Dam Busters" and "The Longest Day," died on Thursday at his home in Little Humby, England. He was 90.

Mr. Todd, who died in his sleep, had been ill with cancer for some time, his spokeswoman told Agence France-Presse.

Dark-haired and Irish-born, Mr. Todd simultaneously embodied the dashing romantic hero and the straight-backed British military man. He earned an Academy Award nomination for "The Hasty Heart" (1949), a drama set in Burma at the end of World War II. Based on the stage play by John Patrick, the film starred Mr. Todd as Cpl. Lachlan MacLachlan, a dour, mortally wounded Scotsman; it also starred Ronald Reagan and Patricia Neal. (Mr. Todd lost the Oscar for best actor to Broderick Crawford in "All the King's Men.")

Mr. Todd also starred in "The Dam Busters" (1953), based on the true story of Royal Air Force Squadron 617, which in daring wartime raids used specialized "bouncing" bombs to demolish strategic German dams. Mr. Todd portrayed the squadron leader, Wing Cmdr. Guy Gibson.

In "The Longest Day" (1962), Mr. Todd played Maj. John Howard, the British officer who in the predawn hours of D-Day led the glider-borne seizure of Pegasus Bridge in Normandy. Mr. Todd, a D-Day veteran himself, was among the first British paratroopers dropped into Normandy; he then made his way to the bridge, where Major Howard and his men were holding it fast against German panzer units.

Mr. Todd also won critical acclaim for his starring role in "A Man Called Peter" (1955), a biographical film about the Rev. Peter Marshall, a Scottish-born minister who became chaplain of the United States Senate. Reviewing the picture in *The New York Times*, Bosley Crowther wrote that Mr. Todd delivered his character's sermons "with a clarity and a vibrance that make one hang intently on his words."

As the British press reported over the years, Mr. Todd was Ian Fleming's first choice to play the dapper hero in Fleming's "Dr. No" (1962), the first James Bond film. Previous commitments kept him from taking the part, and Sean Connery prevailed.

Mr. Todd's other films include "Stage Fright" (1950), directed by Alfred Hitchcock; "The Virgin Queen" (1955), in which he played Sir Walter Raleigh to Bette Davis's Elizabeth I; "D-Day (The Sixth of June)" (1956); and "Saint Joan" (1957), with Jean Seberg.

The son of a British Army offi-



Top, Richard Todd with Patricia Neal in "The Hungry Heart" (1949); above, Mr. Todd in "A Man Called Peter" (1955).

cer, Richard Andrew Paethorpe-Todd was born in Dublin on June 11, 1919, and reared in Ireland, India and England. Intending to become a playwright, he enrolled at the Italia Conti Academy, a London drama school, to study acting. He found he enjoyed being onstage.

In 1939 Mr. Todd was a founder of the Dundee Repertory Company in Scotland. The Scottish burr he would perfect there would stand him in good professional stead: in 1945 he replaced Richard Basehart in the role of Lachie in the original Broadway production of "The Hasty Heart," which helped secure him the movie role.

In 1953 Mr. Todd was Scottish once more as the star of the Walt Disney picture "Rob Roy, the Highland Rogue." His other Disney films are "The Story of Robin Hood and His Merrie Men" (1952) and "The Sword and the Rose" (1953).

Mr. Todd was awarded the Or-

der of the British Empire in 1963. He wrote two memoirs, "Caught in the Act" (1986) and "In Camera" (1989), both published in Britain.

Mr. Todd's first marriage, to Catherine Grant-Bogle, ended in divorce, as did his second, to Virginia Maier. His survivors include a daughter, Fiona, from his first marriage, and a son, Andrew, from his second. Two other sons died before him: Seumas, from Mr. Todd's second marriage, committed suicide in 1997; Peter, from his first marriage, committed suicide in 2005.

In an interview with *The Daily Mail* of London in 2006, Mr. Todd spoke about the loss of his sons with the kind of stoicism his characters so often displayed. "I am not going around saying, 'Why me? Why me?'" he said. "What helps me is accepting it, getting on with things." He added: "You can't let yourself go on wallowing."