

Name: _____

Biographies: Sammy Davis Jr.



Samuel George Davis Jr. was born in Harlem, New York, on December 8, 1925. He was the son of Elvera Sánchez, a Cuban dancer, and Sammy Davis, Sr., an African-American artist; his parents were a vaudeville dance couple. Sammy was raised by his grandmother until he was three. After his parents separated, Sammy's father was given custody and started taking him along on tour..

Sammy learned to sing, dance, play the vibraphone, trumpet, and drums on these tours. Eventually, he became part of the show with his father and Uncle Will Mastin, they were called the 'Will Mastin Trio'.

Sammy's musical career leaped to new heights in 1947, when the Will Mastin Trio opened for Frank Sinatra at the Capitol Theater in New York. From that time on, Sammy had a strong friendship and constant artistic collaborations with Sinatra. After that concert, he joined a tour with Mickey Rooney. A few years later, Sammy's talent was discovered by Decca Records, which signed a recording contract with him in 1954.

On November 19, 1954, in San Bernardino, while driving to Los Angeles, California, to record a soundtrack, Sammy was in a car accident. He was seriously injured and lost an eye. He used a prosthesis, a glass eye, for the rest of his life. During his recovery, Sammy reflected on his life and made the decision to convert to the Jewish religion.

Exactly six years after the accident in which he lost his left eye, on November 19, 1960, Sammy married the Swedish actress May Britt. This marriage caused much controversy, because May Britt was white, and interracial marriages were prohibited by law in 31 states of the United States. Because their marriage was so controversial, President John F. Kennedy asked Sammy and his wife not to attend his inauguration. President Kennedy did not want to upset whites from the South.





Although his fame allowed him to lead a carefree, comfortable playboy lifestyle, Sammy faced constant racial prejudices, which led Davis to use his fame for political purposes. During the 1960s, he actively participated in the civil rights movement, and joined the 1963 March on Washington. He refused to perform in racially segregated dance clubs or nightclubs, which is considered to have been a driving force behind racial integration in Las Vegas and Miami Beach.

His friend, Frank Sinatra, was the leader of a group of artists that the press called the 'Rat Pack', for being the most famous singers of fashion on stages in North America. The members of the group were: Sinatra, Dean Martin, Peter Lawford, Joey Bishop and of course Sammy Davis Jr.

Sammy was a lifelong smoker, and in 1989, doctors discovered a tumor in his throat. He gave his last performance that year, at the Harrah's Casino in Lake Tahoe. Soon after, Davis underwent radiation therapy. Although the disease appeared to be in remission, it was discovered that it resurfaced. Sammy passed away in his home surrounded by his family and several friends.

Sammy Davis Jr., died at his home in Beverly Hills, California, on May 16, 1990, at the age of 64. He was buried in the "Forest Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery" in Glendale, California next to his father and Will Mastin.

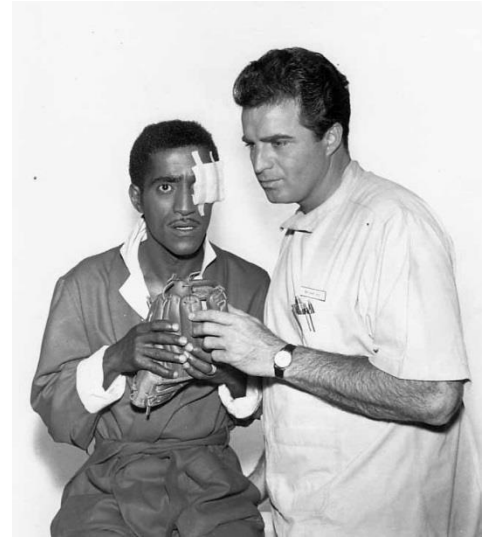
On May 18, 1990, two days after Davis's death, the neon lights of the Las Vegas Strip went out for ten minutes as a tribute to him. In 2001, he was honored with a posthumous Grammy Award for his entire career, the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award.



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ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

1. In what year did Sammy lose his left eye?
 - a. In 1947
 - b. In 1954
 - c. In 1960
 - d. In 1963



2. Who was the leader of the 'Rat Pack'?
 - a. Sammy Davis Jr.
 - b. Dean Martin
 - c. Frank Sinatra
 - d. Peter Lawford

3. How many years after the accident did Sammy and May Britt get married?
 - a. 3
 - b. 4
 - c. 5
 - d. 6



4. After the accident in which he lost an eye, Sammy became a Buddhist
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. What was the cause of the death of Sammy Davis Jr.?
 - a. A lung tumor caused by heavy cigarette smoking
 - b. A tumor in the throat caused by heavy cigarette smoking
 - c. A tumor in the liver caused by heavy cigarette smoking
 - d. A brain tumor caused by heavy cigarette smoking

