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BROOKLYN — Richard Dreyfuss was born in Brooklyn on Oct. 29, 1947, the second of three children, to a lawyer-turned-restaurant owner. At the age of nine, he moved with his family to Beverly Hills, California. Growing up there, he attended Beverly Hills High School and San Fernando Valley State College, now known as California State University, Northridge. He became friends with children of show business families who also went on to become major stars: Rob Reiner (son of Carl), Harry Einstein (son of radio comic Parkyakarkus), Larry Bishop and Albert Brooks.

At the age of twelve Richard made a decision to become an actor. His career started with appearances in plays at the Beverly Hills Jewish Community Center. He attended San Fernando Valley State College, but was expelled after getting into a heated argument with a professor over Marlon Brando's performance in "Julius Caesar" (1953). To dodge being drafted for the Vietnam conflict, he registered as a conscientious objector and spent two years as a clerk at a Los Angeles hospital instead of enlisting.

During this time, Dreyfuss started getting a few acting jobs on network television series such as "Bewitched" and "Big Valley." His first film role was in the bloody biopic "Dillinger" (1973). A memorable leading role as an intelligent, contemplative teen in George Lucas' "American Graffiti" (1973) earned Dreyfuss critical acclaim, as did his portrayal of an entrepreneurial Jewish youth in The "Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz" (1974).

In 1975 the actor's career exploded when he starred as an arrogant shark expert in Steven Spielberg's "Jaws." He worked for Spielberg again two years later, playing an average Midwestern working stiff who learns that we are not alone in the universe in "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." Further success followed that same year when Dreyfuss portrayed a failed actor in Neil Simon's romantic comedy "The Goodbye Girl." His performance won him an Oscar, making him, at the age of 29, the youngest performer ever to receive the Best Actor honor. Dreyfuss arrived for the 1978 Oscar award ceremonies in Los Angeles with his girlfriend in tow. Sylvester Stallone was the presenter of the Best Actor Award. After he read the names of nominees, he announced: "The new heavyweight champ is ... Richard Dreyfuss." One observer swore that Richard Burton jumped out of his seat, but it was Dreyfuss who was punching the air as he bounded onto the stage. The stubble-chinned winner announced: "I didn't prepare anything." He paused and said, "Wait a minute ... am I here?" and laughed, "I don't wanna leave." The camera turned to his girlfriend who sat crying in the audience as he walked off.

Dreyfuss was very busy on TV and in films ever since the award until 1981 although none of his films proved particularly popular, and the actor's career began to nosedive. Matters were worsened by his alleged drug use and Hollywood party antics. In 1982, he was involved in a car accident and arrested for possession of cocaine.

Fortunately, after going into rehab, Dreyfuss managed to turn his life around, and appeared in the rarely seen "Buddy System" (1984), and made a big comeback in Paul Mazursky's hit comedy "Down and Out in Beverly Hills" (1986), starring opposite Bette Midler and Nick Nolte. With his reputation restored, Dreyfuss went on to appear in lead and supporting roles in numerous films of varying quality. Highlights include "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" (1990), "Postcards From the Edge" (1990), "What About Bob?" (1991), and "Quiz Show" (1994). In 1996, Dreyfuss played one of his finest roles as a high school music teacher who sacrifices his dream of becoming a famous composer to help his students in "Mr.

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Weekly Cover

Richard Dreyfuss began his acting career at age 12. He has been very busy acting and directing in films and on TV as well as writing. He was born in Brooklyn on Oct. 29, 1947. Winner of an Oscar for Best Actor he has also been honored with his place on the Brooklyn Celebrity Path at Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

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Holland's Opus." The role earned Dreyfuss an Oscar nomination. That same year, he won acclaim of a different sort, lending his voice to a sarcastic centipede in Tim Burong's animated adaption of Roald Dahl's "James and the Giant Peach." He went on to appear in Sidney Lumet's "Night Falls on Manhattan" (1997) and to star in "Krippendorf's Tribe" in 1998. The following year he could be seen as titular Jewish gangster "Lansky," a made-for-TV biopic scripted by David Mamet. A recent film in which Dreyfuss appears is "Who Is Cletis Tout?" (2002).

As Dreyfuss was being considered for an Oscar for "The Goodbye Girl," producer Joseph Papp offered Dreyfuss the role of Cassius in Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" which was to have been a Shakespeare-in-the-Park production. Dreyfuss prepared for the part by studying with a Shakespeare coach for three months. At the first rehearsal Papp announced he couldn't find a director and the play had been cancelled. Dreyfuss had rushed back to New York from the Oscar presentation by chartered jet to continue preparations for the role. But it was not all in vain. The play was finally performed in Dreyfuss's birthplace — Brooklyn — at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

You'll find Brooklyn's homage to Dreyfuss on Brooklyn's Celebrity Path at Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Dreyfuss has three children, Emily, Benjamin and Harry. He and his first wife Susan Davis divorced. His present wife is Janelle Lacey whom he married on May 30, 1999. Watch the schedules of movies on television if you would like to see one of Dreyfuss's many features. They are on quite frequently.

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