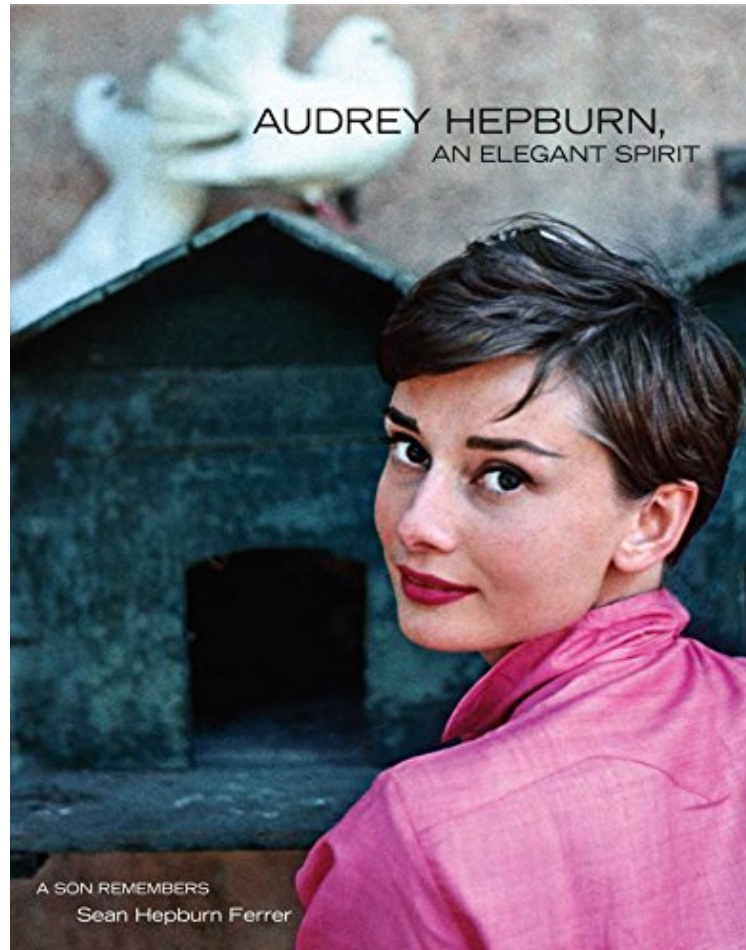


## Audrey Hepburn, An Elegant Spirit: A Son Remembers

*Sean Hepburn Ferrer*

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**Sean Hepburn Ferrer : Audrey Hepburn, An Elegant Spirit: A Son Remembers** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Audrey Hepburn, An Elegant Spirit: A Son Remembers:

23 of 23 people found the following review helpful. A Son Loves His Mother...Who Happens to Be Audrey HepburnBy Ed UyeshimaIf there is a polar opposite to Christina Crawford's scathing poor-me memoir, "Mommie Dearest", it has to be this loving tribute to Audrey Hepburn from her eldest son, Sean Hepburn Ferrer. Rather than being an exhaustive biography on the legendary film star (and enough of those exist anyway), it is more a very attractive coffee table book with remembrances from her colleagues, family friends and most importantly, Ferrer himself. It is a testament to Hepburn that all these books, especially this one, have been nothing less than respectful and at times downright reverential. There is no getting around the fact that she was well loved by those closest around her and certainly by her fans, me included. That she comes across as such a giving person merely validates what we all want to believe about her, and this becomes especially clear in Ferrer's account of her later years making goodwill trips

to Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Somalia on behalf of UNICEF. And while as a fan, I was disappointed about her long absences from films from the late sixties until her death in 1993, Ferrer makes it clear how important motherhood was to her and how imperative it was for her to stay at home with her sons during those years. Just from the treasure trove of family photos, this book clearly shows that her dedication to them was and continues to be reciprocated. The perspective of this book is understandably biased but fresh, and obviously Ferrer's access to his mother's personal belongings - family snapshots, paintings and drawings done by her, even her passports - builds an intimate story. I have to admit I was taken aback by the more familiar photos of Hepburn during her Hollywood glory years (especially the glamorous Cecil Beaton pictures) and amazed at how lovely she continued to look in the professional photos taken a year or so before her death. Not surprisingly, the most moving part is Ferrer's account of her final weeks when she took one last flight from California to what looks to be a most idyllic place, her home La Paisible in Switzerland. This should be the final word about her, but that is unlikely as she continues to fascinate. Somewhere Joan Crawford must be eating her heart out.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Most fitting title I have ever encountered! A wonderful book! By Edward Lawrence

Wow! This one would have been a shame to miss. I always strongly admired Miss A. Hepburn (and Miss K. Hepburn) and was saddened by her demise. Audrey was the opposite of the busty Hollywood stars such as Miss Monroe, who I also liked. I preferred Audrey's class over the many crass others. Those eyes alone were enough to make a young male fascinated, and then there was her voice and grace. Back to this book, written by her son: Buy it. He writes his views in a simple, straightforward style that conveys information in a penetrating manner that itself is marvelous. No, memorable! I'm nearing the end of the book now, and don't want it to end. It is a fitting tribute to an unforgettable woman who was truly "An Elegant Spirit." I can not top that title.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. She was such a kind gentle personality and there will never be a finer soul for UNICEF than Audrey Hepburn

By janeke 46

What an elegant spirit indeed. She was such a kind gentle personality and there will never be a finer soul for UNICEF than Audrey Hepburn.. She took on the ambassador role with reluctance, but I feel she was the best they ever had. Gone far too soon!

Now in paperback, an intimate look at the woman the world adored, by the son who adored her with unique photos, drawings, and other rare Audrey memorabilia. She dazzled millions as Gigi. Eliza Doolittle. Holly Golightly. But to her most adoring fan, Audrey Hepburn was best known for her role as "Mummy." In this heartfelt tribute to his mother, Sean Hepburn Ferrer offers a rare and intimate glimpse into the life of one of Hollywood's brightest stars. Audrey Hepburn, *An Elegant Spirit* is a stunning compilation of nearly 300 photographs, many straight from the family album and never before published; archival documents, personal correspondence, and mementos; even paintings and illustrations from the actress herself. Sean tells Audrey Hepburn's remarkable story, from her childhood in war-torn Holland to the height of her fame to her autumn years far from the camera and the crush of the paparazzi. Sean introduces us to someone whose grace, charm, and beauty were matched only by her insecurity about her appearance and talent, and who used her hard-won recognition as a means to help children less fortunate than her own. With this unique biography, Sean celebrates his mother's history and humanity—and continues her charitable work by donating proceeds from this book to the Audrey Hepburn Children's Fund.

From Publishers Weekly

Hepburn's son (with actor Mel Ferrer) shows his mother as a compassionate, emotional woman who searched for and offered love above all. He traces the roots of his mother's longing in her experiences with her distant father and the destruction of her native Belgium during WWII. Via photos and stories, he notes how Hepburn (1929-1993) aimed to live an everyday family life of home, school and holidays. Rendering her husbands respectfully and without off-color stories, Ferrer doesn't offer lascivious behind-the-scenes dramas or quips about directorial injustices. Instead, he lets designers and composers who worked with Hepburn talk about the actor's inimitable talents. Composer Henry Mancini believes her "quality of wistfulness" inspired the songs he wrote for her, especially *Breakfast at Tiffany's* "Moon River." Designer Cecil Beaton calls her an "authentic existential Galatea" with a voice containing the "quality of heartbreak." Ferrer also details Hepburn's influential friendship with clothing designer Hubert de Givenchy, including the dressmaker's generosity in Hepburn's final days. Directors William Wyler and Billy Wilder also appear, as do actors Gary Cooper and Fred Astaire (the latter was Hepburn's co-star in her favorite movie, *Funny Face*). Movie-related photos abound, but the most memorable images are of Hepburn's family and the children she met in her work with UNICEF. Her 1989 speech to members of the United Nations staff on the millions of dying children in developing countries concludes the book. What began as a son's remembrance and selective movie survey becomes a call to action. In this way, the work differs greatly from standard self-important star bios. 300 full-color and bw photos. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal

A family memoir. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist

\*Starred \* When trying to define celluloid grace and spirit, one name shoots to mind--Hepburn. Two new memoirs--one written by Audrey Hepburn's son, the other by a well-known biographer who was like a son to Katharine Hepburn--recall these extraordinary women. Although certain similarities exist beyond the coincidence of name (both were luminous presences on screen who followed their hearts), the differences were legion. Audrey's son, Sean Ferrer (son of actor Mel Ferrer), explains

that acting was a second choice for Audrey after she was told she could not become a prima ballerina due to lack of proper training while growing up during World War II. Though happy to make one successful film after the other, she longed to have children and then retired to raise them. When UNICEF came calling, Audrey, remembering the aid she'd received after the war, became the agency's ambassador, never sparing herself, traveling to war-ravaged regions like Somalia to raise awareness of the plight of children. Katharine Hepburn, on the other hand, called herself a "pig" when it came to her career. Single-minded, she wanted neither husband nor children encumbering her as she devoted herself to her work. These memoirs, though packaged very differently, both do a remarkable job of bringing readers the essence of each woman. Ferrer's remembrance is rather slight on text, but what is there is rich, evocative, and dotted with fresh anecdotes; certainly the facts concerning Audrey's final illness have never been disclosed in such heartbreaking detail. Bolstering the writing are loads of marvelous pictures, many straight from the family album, and Audrey's extraordinary beauty and joy shine from every one of them. Only she could wear a babushka on her wedding day and look fabulous. Using a proposed article as entree to Katharine's home, Berg never left, staying often at Hepburn's places in New York and Connecticut. This arrangement gave him the opportunity for many conversations, the substance of which, according to Berg, Hepburn knew would be used as the basis of a book. Fans already know much of the outline of Hepburn's life, but this intensely readable account (held for publication until Hepburn's death) fills in amazing details about such pivotal events as the death of her brother by hanging, her relationships with powerful men like Howard Hughes and John Ford, and her slow, sad decline. Surprisingly, there's little new added to what we know of the Hepburn-Tracy love affair; even more surprising is Berg's veiled commentary (put into the mouth of a friend but seemingly confirmed by the author) revealing Hepburn's bisexuality. Berg's writing is so intimate that readers may feel they are hiding behind a curtain as they listen to the stories he elicits from his subject. Kate herself comes across pretty much the way she did on screen: bossy, courageous, and self-involved (though this trait was inverted when it came to caring for Tracy). In the end, one Hepburn died too soon, and the other perhaps tarried too long, but they will both live on in their movies, which is very lucky for the rest of us. Ilene Cooper

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