

FELBERG REAL LIFE STORIES

*Julia
Roberts*

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY



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Julia  *Roberts*

A short biography

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INTRODUCTION

Critics claim she keeps playing the same character over and over again—a young woman from lower classes whose attractive appearance is unveiled and then used by privileged social circles.

Popular culture specialists say she owes her success to the expertise of script writers, directors and producers, who have been cunning enough to fit her screen image into the taste of the masses.

Millions of movie lovers all over the world don't care what the explanation for this phenomenon is. They simply adore Julia Roberts. In the eyes of women she embodies the age-old myth of Cinderella. In the eyes of the men she remains someone to be loved and desired, but also to be protected. A vamp and waif in one.

Julia herself says she is so popular because she plays ordinary girls, because she is Miss Everybody that any and every woman can identify with.

What is Julia Roberts really like?

A Southerner in New York

Julia Roberts was born in a family with acting traditions. Her parents—Walter (known as Rob) and Betty Lou Roberts were both touring actors. For several years, they traveled from one American military base to another with the production of *George Washington Slept Here*, directed by Rance Howard. They got married in 1955 and settled in the south of the USA. They bought a large white Victorian house on the outskirts of Atlanta and opened the Actors and Writers Workshop. Betty Lou taught acting there and Walter wrote plays which they later staged with trainee casts.

The Roberts had three children. Eric was born in 1956, later to become a film and TV actor. Lisa came next, in 1965, and is now an actress and off-Broadway producer in New York. Finally, on October 28, 1967, Julia (or, properly, Julie) was born.

In 1972, Walter and Betty Lou got divorced. The mother took Lisa and Julia to the nearby Smyrna and Eric stayed with his father in Atlanta. The divorce also meant the end of the Actors and Writers Workshop. Walter Roberts started selling vacuum cleaners for a living. Betty Lou was a secretary in a local parish first, then she became a real estate agent.

For Julia, her parents' divorce and parting with brother Eric was a painful experience. Another tragic event marked her tenth birthday: her father died of cancer in 1977. Years later Julia would still remember those dramatic changes and even see them as reasons for her adult-life problems, especially those connected to relationships with men.

Julia grew up in Smyrna in an atmosphere that can only be described as completely unrestrained hippie culture. She enjoyed walking barefoot, wearing flowers in her hair and . . . stealing other girls' boyfriends just for fun. She was extremely bored with school and studying. After finishing Campbell High School, at the tender age of 17, she gave up any further education. "I had a choice: to get married,

to go to university or to become an actress. I chose the last option,” she says in retrospect. Julia’s mother agreed and let her daughter leave for New York. And so Julia joined her elder brother and sister, who had already started their acting careers there.

However, her beginnings in New York weren’t easy. To pay her rent, she had to do the strangest of odd jobs. “For some time, I worked in an Italian ice-cream parlor where I had to beat eggs for the ice cream. It was a nightmare: eggs and cream, eggs and cream. The very sound of those words makes me sick. Today I can’t believe I did it,” recalls Julia. “I think the longest I worked was at a shoe store at the corner of 72nd Street and Broadway. Near Gray’s Papaya, where I often ate because for one dollar you could have lunch there.”

When she wasn’t working she went to acting classes. She also attended diction classes, where she fought her southern accent. Julia knew that this most ridiculed accent in American cinema could stand in the way to acting success.



CHAPTER TWO

A beautiful ugly duckling

Julia Roberts took her first steps in show business with a little help from her elder brother Eric, then an established actor known from *Star 80* and *Runaway Train*. She started as a model at the Click agency. In spite of her ideal measurements (175 cm tall, 50 kg weight) and exceptionally shapely legs (112 cm long!), she didn’t take to modeling. In fact, she considered herself ugly, claiming her nose was too big and her lips—as she put it—were “borrowed from Donald Duck.” But in Julia’s opinion, to be in the movies one didn’t have to be bothered by looks so much. She said in an interview: “Today’s audiences don’t expect beautiful actresses full of mysterious, sophisticated femininity. So why not me?”

In 1986 Julia Roberts got her first bit part in the TV series *Crime Story*. In the same year, thanks to her brother’s