

# Country note: drunken ex-husband Paul De Fau



Germaine Greer

29 May 2004

## **Germaine Greer wonders what shall she do with the drunken ex-husband?**

"There's a piece about you in the Daily Mail," said the driver, who's of the view that all publicity for his guv'nor is good publicity. "Two pages and a picture."

"What am I supposed to have done now?" I asked wearily. No one from the Daily Mail had called me for a comment or even to check their facts.

I could hardly imagine that it was running a feature on my installing a new pond filter, to make life more pleasant for the 10 koi I inherited from the lodger. (I've given them names: Trevor, Colin, Dora, Smudgy, Summer, Stealthy, Pearl, Diamond, Sigmund and Pig.)

Nor did I think the Daily Mail would have covered my address to Fourteenth International Congress of Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynaecology on the epidemic of terror occasioned by mass screening for cervical cancer, or my address to the Breast Care Conference on the unsatisfactory state of our understanding of breast disease.

Nor did I entertain any suspicion that the paper might have defied the embargo and run something on my plea for an Aboriginal Australia, called Whitefella Jump Up, due to appear on July 8. The next day the driver showed up with a copy of the pages in question. Behold, it was my ex-husband, Paul du Feu, rehashing his one and only story to someone called Helen Weathers. "I was Mr Germaine Greer" ran the headline with a parenthesis. "Our marriage lasted three-and-a-half weeks and that was three weeks too long!"

The story he told was an even more garbled version of the story he sold to the American publishers Putnam and Co in 1972, for, if I am correctly informed, \$60,000, a rather bigger advance than I got for *The Female Eunuch*.

Weathers could have simply recycled bits from the book and saved herself the cost of a phone call to Oakland where, she tells me, Paul is growing tomatoes. I think she must have talked to him only on the telephone, for otherwise I can't imagine how she thought that when he fell off a roof five years ago, he shattered his arm.

He shattered his pelvis and, if you've got half an hour, he'll bore you to tears telling you how brilliantly American doctors pieced him together bone fragment by bone fragment. At least I think that's how it was, because now I come to think of it, for the past 30 years I've talked to him only on the phone.

When I was last in San Francisco, I suggested we meet and he, chivalrous as ever, simply said: "No point." I was considering salving my conscience for the act of immense folly I committed in marrying him by adding to the regular handouts he gets from his third ex-wife, Maya Angelou, which are what he actually lives on, as I understand the situation.

What Weathers didn't know, and du Feu didn't tell her is that when he met me, he was only recently discharged from the hospital where he had been treated for alcoholic poisoning. For the first part of our acquaintance, which was strictly at weekends, he soft-pedalled on the booze. He suggested marriage, I made certain conditions that he appeared to accept, but by the time I was on the train down from Coventry heading for the register office, I knew I was in deep trouble.

When the waiter on the train asked me why I looked so sad, I said: "I'm going to marry a drunk," and burst into tears, so he gave me a free bottle of Liebfraumilch to cheer me up. I was so miserable that I drank it.

The grim ceremony over, the bridal party went to a Bayswater club to celebrate. A sweet-faced old lady in men's clothing asked if she might dance with the bride, I stepped into her arms for a turn around the room and my drunken husband offered to fight her.

That night, my wedding night, he refused to let me get into the bed and I had to sleep in an armchair. He doesn't remember this because he was drunk. I wasn't drunk. I remember every insult, every jeer, every threat, every humiliation.

I didn't walk out "after a series of domestic rows"; I don't do rows. We were at a Sunday afternoon drinks party in a studio off Ladbroke Grove. He turned to me and sneered (drunk as usual): "I could have any woman in this room." "Except me," I said, and walked away for ever.

## **On Her Third Attempt, Maya Angelou Finds the Ideal Husband, Germaine Greer's Ex**

To their neighbours in northern California, Maya Angelou and her unlikely husband, Paul du Feu, are the beauty and the bloke. She is the luminous writer and actress who in the past five years was nominated for both a Pulitzer Prize (for poetry) and a Broadway Tony. This past season Maya was an insightful commentator on PBS's *Assignment: America*. She is also one of the few women (and the first black one)

admitted to Hollywood's Directors Guild and is a key member of President Ford's advisory council on the Bicentennial.

Admittedly, it's easy to sensationalize the pasts of Maya and Paul and their marriage (the third for each). Aside from his current vocation as a master carpenter, du Feu is manifestly un-young (40 to her 47), ungifted (by his own description) and unblack. Paul was a Welsh-born workingman and comic strip writer who won notoriety as "Mr. Germaine Greer"—his second wife was the feminist author of *The Female Eunuch*. Actually, Paul and Germaine were wed only three tempestuous weeks "in the eyes of God," he maintains, though they didn't bother to divorce for six years. "I didn't mind the 'Mr. Greer' part of it," he reflects, "but in retrospect it seems we spent our married life in pubs, smashed on our bums. I would not marry her again, but I wouldn't discourage anyone else. She is a sexy, funny lady."

It was five years ago at a literary pour in Soho that Paul first spotted Maya. She had just published her best-selling autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. "This tall, handsome Englishman came up and asked if I were alone," Maya recalls. "I said, 'Yes, why?' and he told me I was the most beautiful woman in the world, and could he take me to dinner—right now? Well, we've never been apart a single night since, except for professional commitments."

At first Paul's reputation as a super-stud seemed to rule out wedlock: he had merchandised his whingding with Greer into the first nude centrefold of *British Cosmopolitan*, plus an insouciant sexual memoir, *Let's Hear It for the Long-Legged Woman*. (Maya stands the *de rigueur* six feet tall; Paul is 5'11½".) Besides, Maya's earlier marriages, one to an African revolutionary, the other to a Greek, were obviously traumatic—they are

the only part of her harrowing history she refuses to discuss. The idea of legalization was Paul's. "But he never whitemailed me," she notes wryly. "He said that if I were British or he black he'd be agreeable to merely live together. But with the difference in cultures, he wanted to make a public statement. So, we married." What's more, Maya says, "We liked the ceremony so much, and love each other so much, that we've been married twice since, and we'll do it again."

Life was only lately so merry for Maya. She grew up in a fatherless home in Arkansas' cotton belt, where, as she remembered it, "the high spots were usually negative: droughts, floods, lynching's and deaths." She was reading Shakespeare but felt like "a too-big Negro girl with nappy black hair, broad feet and a space between my teeth that would hold a No. 2 pencil." At the age of 8 Maya was raped by her mother's boyfriend. At 16 she graduated from high school, unwed and eight months pregnant. While continuing her self-education, she became San Francisco's first black streetcar conductor, then left for the street life in Los Angeles. While a waitress at the Hi Hat Club, she ran a two-woman whorehouse, and one of her own lovers forced her briefly into prostitution.

It took a sobering visit to a heroin hit joint to jolt Maya back into a legit showbiz career of blues-singing and dancing. She toured Europe with a road company of *Porgy and Bess*, then took a few years off to teach in Ghana and raise funds for Martin Luther King Jr. In 1972 Angelou wrote the script and music for Diana Sands' last movie, *Georgia, Georgia*. The next year she co-starred on Broadway with Geraldine Page in *Look A Way*, a play about Mary Todd Lincoln.

For all her protean artistic talents, Maya is as unashamedly non-intellectual as her blue-collar husband. "A painter paints, a builder

builds, a writer writes, but does an intellectual intellect?" Maya asks. "We had to get away from that nonsense." She and Paul fled from Berkeley to the rolling wine country of Sonoma. Their crowd includes her son, Guy (now 30 and with a common-law white wife), and friends like muckraker Jessica (The American Way of Death) Mitford. At the time of their marriage, Mitford cracked that "Paul and Maya embody the two qualities I love most: innocence and criminality." Now she adds more seriously, "They have a rare, perfect union. One doesn't think of colour; that would be absurd." Du Feu agrees. "Maya's brother toasted me and said, 'I look at Paul and call him brother with a straight face,'" he reports. "The racial barriers here are nothing compared to what I went through in London because of my working-class background."

In Sonoma Paul is working feverishly ("I like to sweat") buying and refurbishing dilapidated homes. Maya's activities are no less frenetic: she's directed two plays for PBS, written a TV pilot and completed another volume of poems due this fall. The second instalment of her autobiography, *Gather Together in My Name*, came out last year and, she jokes, "I hope to have three more in three years or so. I intend to become America's black female Proust." Certainly, Maya has the material—she has not yet reached Paul or her last two decades. "Once after a lecture in North Carolina," Angelou recalls, "a pretty little white girl came up to me and said that she adored my writing but didn't believe in interracial marriage. I looked at her and thought of what my son's life would be like if he were married to her. So, I said, 'Honey, neither do I.'

**By ANGELA TAYLOR** APRIL 4, 1972

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## As a Campaign Issue, Fashion Is Out of Style

These findings are similar to others which suggest that as the size of the group increases, the amount of information that is shared decreases.

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Source: *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 92(439), 1039-1052.



... and the ...



1994-1995 2000-2001



### England's First Male Pin-up Leaves Coyness to Others

**By Dennis Daniels**  
 Reported on some  
 editions of this week's  
*Journal*, I understand you  
 are in a desperate state.  
 I feel the same about the  
*Journal* as you do.

[illegible][illegible]

"It is completely the way I thought it was to be constructed," he said. "The problem was a lot of digging, and that means the price for the equipment was very high."

### SHIP TALE

#### *An Unseamly Revival*

[illegible][illegible]

“You’re watching a whole lot of *Thelma & Louise*,” says the *Philly* critic, as much as to inform

the rest of us (though “some guppies, some darters, and a few more” — that doesn’t make sense, and neither do “in 1984” and “the 1980s”) as to tell us that *Philly* will give us the message to look elsewhere, toward movies that actually transcend the

franchise formula of a past, as

The photograph shows a person's arm and hand. The hand is holding a small, light-colored object, which appears to be a piece of wood or a tool. The background is dark and out of focus.

There are 100,000 people in the world who are blind, and 100,000 who are deaf. The World Council of Churches is working to help them. It is doing this by sending people to live with them and learn their languages. This is how they can help them. The World Council of Churches is working to help them. It is doing this by sending people to live with them and learn their languages. This is how they can help them.

Stretched out across the centrefold of this month's British Cosmopolitan magazine is a muscular nude, his right leg strategically bent to keep him modest.

He looks squeaky clean, as though he's just had a scrub down with Pears soap and a loofah. His face is unlined, and so is his stomach, despite the bent knee. But look again, there's something missing—he doesn't have a navel, which makes him not exactly human, but rather like a Greek god sprung from the sea or some father god's forehead.

He's Paul du Feu, British Cosmo's first playboy. (His American counterpart navel and all, is Burt Reynolds, the actor. He's a lot more hirsute, blending into the fur rug he lies on, but explains Mr. du Feu, "Englishmen are less hairy.")

"Cosmo never noticed' my divinity," said Mr. du Feu, looking very human indeed as he relaxed in a friend's apartment here, wearing black T-shirt and slacks and with a sign of 5 o'clock shadow although it was still morning.

He doesn't think that it was Victorian prudery that changed his anatomy, but rather the re-toucher's enthusiasm with an airbrush to make him look young and unlined. "After all," he said, "I'm 36 years old, I've been a construction worker since I was 15, I've picked up some scar tissue and bags under my eyes along the way."

But his missing navel isn't Paul du Feu's only claim to fame. He has been married since 1968 to Germaine Greer, author of "The Female Eunuch" and England's foremost women's liberationist.

Not that they really worked at it. The marriage lasted three weeks—or more accurately, three weekends. They see each other occasionally these days and neither one of them is pressing for a divorce — "It's a safeguard against the next marriage."

Being Mr. Germaine Greer certainly helped to land him on the centrefold. "As her husband, I was the perfect person to be ridiculed as a male sex object," he said with a laugh, pushing back his longish hair, which is streaky brown and blond, with a sprinkling of grey. Helen Gurley Brown, Cosmo politicians' editor, had been in London and noised it around that the magazines were searching for a male pin-up.

Both are Unconcerned "A photographer friend felt he was in debt to me—I'd helped him build his house—and he thought if got some money for posing, it would pay me in part," he explained. So, he sold his body for £200 (about \$520), taking the whole thing as joke and never realizing what a splash it would make.

"I told Germaine about it, she said I should have gotten more money," Mr. du Feu said. "She doesn't care and neither do I, I'm not coy."

Nor is Mr. du Feu coy about his marriage to that formidable young woman. They were introduced by friends outside of a pub, she joined them for some boozing and ended up in his flat. Although she insisted that she was against marriage, when he asked her, she went along meekly to the Paddington Registry office.

The courtship was good, but marriage was something else again, he said. "Germaine really cares about rules, I don't," he commented. He had seen marriage as tea in bed, she wouldn't be slave to a kettle. "For a pacifist, she does a lot of fighting. No, she didn't throw the crockery, she has resources enough in her tongue."

Mr. du Feu, who has been talking to publishers here about a book—"an opinionated autobiography"—he has outlined, returns to his hard hat job at the end of the week—"I like it, it pays well and keeps me active." In between his construction labours, he writes for comic strips—"it's easy and I pick up extra money."

#### About Swinging London

Born in Wales, the son of a British civil servant (his French, name comes from forebears who settled in the Channel Islands), he grew up in London and considers himself a cockney. He feels his experiences could make a book, especially about the nineteen-fifties, when swinging London had its first stirrings.

He went to London University for a degree in literature and married his first wife, a fellow student, before he was 20. He has two sons, 17 and 15, of that marriage.

Mr. du Feu is rather lukewarm about women's liberation. He agrees with the fundamentals of equal pay and childcare, but regards as froth a lot of the agitating "about whether they're addressed as Ms., or being barred from some pubs."

"They haven't established any political groundwork and haven't reached the working-class woman who needs the most help," he said. "Many of them don't know what they want, they just think that if those male chauvinist pigs would behave, life would be lovely." GERMAINE

My favourite lines from Germaine Greer's 1970 feminist classic, *The Female Eunuch*, proclaim that: 'The struggle which is not joyous is the wrong struggle. The joy of the struggle is . . . the sense of purpose, achievement and dignity.'

Joy was a vital currency to Greer because, as Elizabeth Kleinhenz's biography makes clear, she experienced precious little of it growing up.

Born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1939, Greer was five years old when her father returned from the war.

She retained only hazy memories of Reg Greer, but she did know that, while he was away, her pretty young mother, Peggy, had enjoyed 'good times' with jovial American soldiers.

Elizabeth Kleinhenz shares key moments from the life of Germaine Greer (pictured) who turns 80 next month in a new biography

If little Germaine hoped the return of a heroic dad would deliver stability, she was painfully disappointed. Invalided out of the army with severe anxiety, 39-year-old Reg looked like an old man, smoking in silence while Peggy applied her make-up to go sunbathing on the beach.

Growing up, Germaine 'longed for her father to love her', says Kleinhenz, 'but when she tried to hug him or climb onto his knee, he would push her away, time after time, until she finally gave up.'

Aged ten, Greer came back from school holding hands with a strange man. She was spotted by Reg, who called the police. By the time they arrived, she and the man had disappeared into some bushes and had to be hauled out.

Told by the police that the man was well known to them, and merely 'simple', Reg's reaction was extraordinary: he told them they 'should've let him get on with it . . . Then he could've been charged'.

Peggy then tore the toaster cord out of its socket and whipped her daughter with it while Reg looked on.

Feeling herself 'too tall, too clever, too noisy', Greer later wrote of having a 'head filled with straw. I won scholarship after scholarship . . . I read books the way other people sniff glue, to get out of my own miserable self'.

Brilliant and bold, with a dazzling wit and a streak of mean, Greer flew through Sydney academia, before whooshing on to a PhD on Shakespeare at Cambridge.

In her adopted home, she developed 'three distinct and wildly contrasting personae': she was the scholarly Dr Greer; she was an actress, appearing in comedy sketches with Kenny Everett; and she was a leading light in the London counterculture, burning the Australian flag in protest against the Vietnam war and writing about the pleasures of group sex.

In 1968, Greer married building worker Paul du Feu, whom she'd met outside a pub, but bolted after three weeks.

GERMAINE by Elizabeth Kleinhenz

Publishers offered Du Feu a bigger advance for his memoir of their brief marriage than Greer got for *The Female Eunuch*. In a draft dedication to that book, she wrote: 'I had made it in a man's world . . . I enjoyed other people's

husbands without risk to my freedom . . . I mocked the women who had sacrificed their liberty for security.’ Yet she wrote her book for them.

The Female Eunuch galvanised the Second Wave of Feminism by encouraging women to enjoy their own minds, bodies and lives without shame. The idea that women could become the heroines of their own lives thrilled those depressed by decades of passivity.

But the joy was short-lived for Greer. She yearned to become a mother, but miscarried. Her rueful 1984 book, *Sex and Destiny*, explored the negative fallout of the free love she had once promoted.

Then, in her 40s, Greer discovered that her dad had lied about most of the details of his early life. An adopted child named Eric Greeney, raised in the Australian island state of Tasmania — not South Africa, as he claimed — he had sailed to the Australian mainland and reinvented himself at 17. Did Reg keep his clever daughter at arm’s length for fear she would see through him?

Kids who are told serious lies often grow into adults driven to expose truth at any cost. Or what they believe to be the truth.

Greer hasn’t always got it right: she hasn’t been consistent and has sometimes been nasty. She continues to court controversy with out-of-step opinions on younger feminists, transgender rights and, most recently, rape.

But I closed Kleinhenz’s book in awe of the woman’s physical, intellectual and emotional energy.

In the past decade, Greer — who turns 80 next month — has devoted much of that energy (and around £3 million) to the rehabilitation of the Australian rainforest. There’s real joy in that.

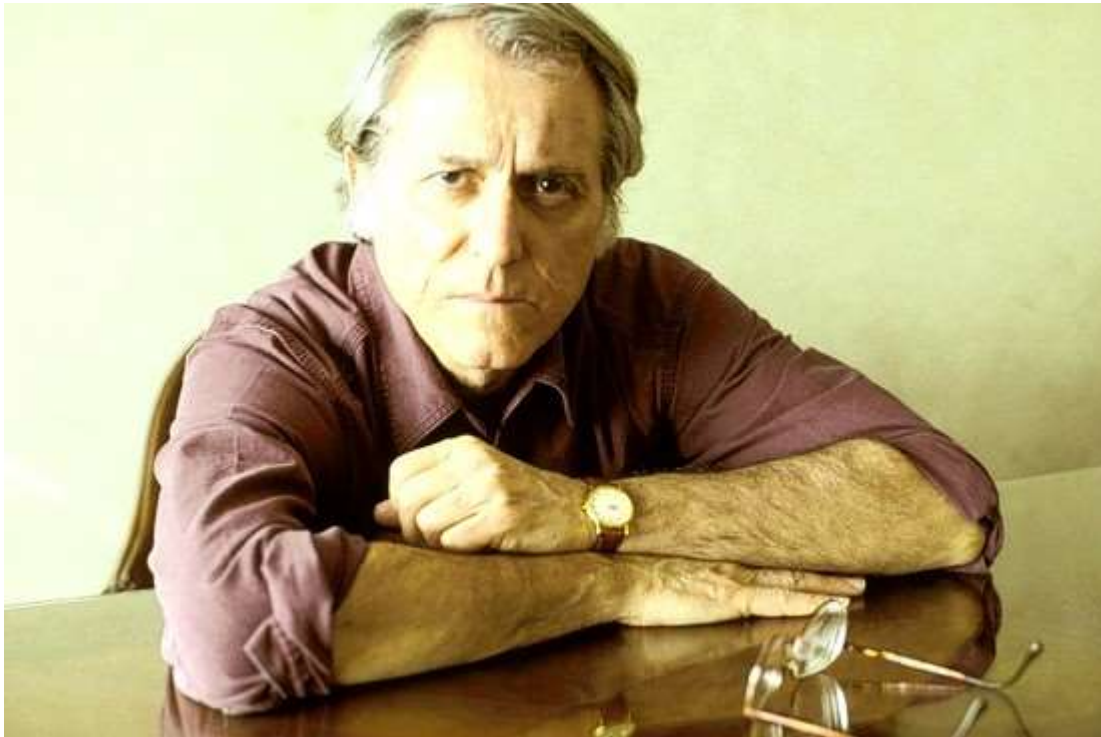
MAY ANGELOU ON WHY SHE MARRIED PAUL DU FEU THREE TIMES - POSTED ON: SEPTEMBER 16, 2016...SCREEN SHOT 2016-09-15 AT 12.27.10 AMMAYA ANGELOU MARRIED PAUL DU FEU. HE WAS A BRITISH CONSTRUCTION WORKER, A PAINTER, AND ONCE DID A NUDE CENTERFOLD FOR THE BRITISH COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE BACK IN THE DAY. HE ALSO WROTE A SEXUAL MEMOIR PRIOR TO MARRYING ANGELOU. BELOW ARE A FEW EXCERPTS FROM ANGELOU’S AND PAUL DU FEU’S 1975 PEOPLE MAGAZINE INTERVIEW ABOUT THEIR INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE:

ON HOW MAYA MET PAUL: “THIS TALL, HANDSOME ENGLISHMAN CAME UP AND ASKED IF I WERE ALONE,” MAYA RECALLS. “I SAID, ‘YES, WHY?’ AND HE TOLD ME I WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD AND COULD HE TAKE ME TO DINNER—RIGHT NOW? WELL, WE’VE NEVER BEEN APART A SINGLE NIGHT SINCE, EXCEPT FOR PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENTS.”

## IMAGE

ANGELOU SAID THEY MARRIED THREE TIMES BECAUSE LOVED EACH OTHER THAT MUCH

(MAYA STANDS THE DE RIGUEUR SIX FEET TALL; PAUL IS 5'11½".) THE IDEA OF LEGALIZATION [MARRIAGE] WAS PAUL'S. "BUT HE NEVER WHITEMAILED ME," [ANGELOU] NOTES WRYLY. "HE SAID THAT IF I WERE BRITISH OR HE BLACK HE'D BE AGREEABLE TO MERELY LIVE TOGETHER. BUT WITH THE DIFFERENCE IN CULTURES, HE WANTED TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT. SO, WE MARRIED." WHAT'S MORE, MAYA SAYS, "WE LIKED THE [WEDDING] CEREMONY SO MUCH, AND LOVE EACH OTHER SO MUCH, THAT WE'VE BEEN MARRIED TWICE SINCE, AND WE



FROM COSMO CENTREFOLD TO POLYNESIAN DICTIONARY BY WAY OF ICONIC AMERICAN LITERATURE!

... AND HERE'S ANOTHER THING ...MARY CATHERINE DU FEU,

SO, DID MARY CATHERINE DU FEU ENJOY READING "CAGED BIRD" – AND DID SHE AND THE AUTHOR EVER MEET? LET'S HOPE SO, BECAUSE MARY CATHERINE WAS, FOR A FEW YEARS, MAYA ANGELOU'S MOTHER-IN-LAW. ANGELOU MET MARY CATHERINE'S SON, PAUL DU FEU IN 1968 OR 1970. THEY MARRIED IN LATE 1973 AND THOUGH THEY DIVORCED IN 1981, ANGELOU LATER DESCRIBED IT AS A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN.

IT'S FAIR TO SAY THE MARRIAGE ATTRACTED COMMENT.... NOT ONLY HAD ANGELOU MARRIED A MAN SEVERAL YEARS YOUNGER THAN HERSELF, BUT HE WAS BRITISH, WHITE, VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED AS A CARPENTER, MASTER BUILDER, WRITER, HOUSE REMODELLER AND CARTOONIST, AND DOUBLY FAMOUS IN BRITAIN AS UK COSMOPOLITAN'S FIRST NEAR-NUDE MALE CENTREFOLD AND FOR HIS SHORT-LIVED MARRIAGE IN 1968 TO THE CELEBRATED FEMINIST ACADEMIC, GERMAINE GREER. THAT, IT SEEMS, WAS NOT A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN – DU FEU AND GREER LIVED TOGETHER FOR ONLY 3 WEEKS, THOUGH THEY DID NOT DIVORCE UNTIL SHORTLY BEFORE HE MARRIED ANGELOU.

WRITING IN 1997, ANGELOU DESCRIBED HER MARRIAGE TO PAUL AS THE MARRIAGE TO END ALL MY MARRIAGES. THEY WERE A RATHER ECCENTRIC, LOVING, UNUSUAL COUPLE, DETERMINED TO LIVE LIFE WITH FLAIR AND LAUGHTER. SHE REMAINED FRIENDS WITH DU FEU, AND ACCORDING TO GERMAINE GREER, HELPED HIM FINANCIALLY DURING HIS LATTER YEARS IN

CALIFORNIA. PAUL DU FEU DIED ON JANUARY 1 2013

