

Brett Somers
1924 – 2007

Brett Somers died on Sept 15 in Westport Connecticut at the age of 83, in her own home, surrounded by members of her loving family. Born in New Brunswick, Canada, July 11, 1924, Brett spent her entire life in the United States making her living as an actress and an entertainer. She was best know as the caustic, irreverent center panelist on the hit 70's game show *Match Game* where she appeared along with stars like Charles Nelson Reilly, Gene Reyburn, Betty White and best friend Marcia Wallace.

At the age of seventeen, Brett (then a young, fiery Audrey Johnston) ran away from her quiet home in Portland, Maine and headed for Greenwich Village without ever looking back. Days after arriving, she discovered Earnest Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises" whereupon Audrey promptly changed her first name to "Brett" after the novel's lead character. She then combined it with her mother's maiden name and re-invented herself as the bohemian *bon vivant* "Brett Somers"—the stage name that would remain with her throughout her life and career.

Brett had three children; Leslie, who died in 2003 of lung cancer, and her half-brothers David and Adam. Brett's first husband Robert Klein was father of Leslie, while her two sons, David and Adam, were born of her eighteen marriage to actor Jack Klugman. Brett and Jack made countless television appearances as a couple, and for many years were sought after guests on the 1970's game and talk show circuit, including *The Mike Douglas Show, He Said, She Said, The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson* and eventually *Match Game*. Ironically, one of Somers most memorable television roles was as Oscar

Madison's ex-wife Blanche on the long running classic television show *The Odd Couple.* A few years after landing the role, the real-life couple separated but were never divorced.

In the summer of 2003, Brett opened in her one-woman cabaret act which she co-wrote and produced with musical director and dear friend Mark Cherry. "An Evening with Brett Somers" opened in New York to rave reviews and in 2003, at the age of seventy-nine, Brett won Backstage's prestigious Bistro award and found herself back in the spotlight.

Shortly after her newfound success, however, Brett was diagnosed with cancer that required immediate treatment. Not one to be pushed around, even by a life-threatening disease, Brett continued to perform anyway, appearing again within weeks of her cancer surgery and insisting that she continue performing all through her chemotherapy treatments.

In August of 2007, Brett's cancer returned, this time inoperable. A proud, self-proclaimed "bohemian" who lived and died by the sword of her wit and righteous indignation, Brett never abandoned her independence--or her irreverence. At peace with her life, her children, her ex, her career and madly in love with her two grandchildren Olivia and Katharine, Brett made an uncharacteristically quiet exit, with no suffering.

She will be forever loved and missed by so many of us.