

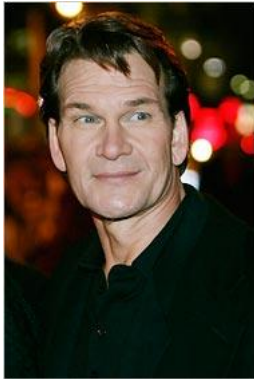
Patrick Swayze, Star of ‘Dirty Dancing,’ Dies at 57

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[Patrick Swayze](#), the balletically athletic actor who rose to stardom in the films “[Dirty Dancing](#)” and “[Ghost](#)” and whose 20-month battle with advanced pancreatic cancer drew wide attention, died Monday. He was 57.



Patrick Swayze in 2005.

His publicist, Annett Wolf, told The Associated Press in Los Angeles that Mr. Swayze died with family at his side.

Mr. Swayze’s cancer was diagnosed in January 2008. Six months after that, he had already outlived his prognosis and was filmed at an airport, smiling at photographers and calling himself, only half-facetiously, “a miracle dude.” He even went through with plans to star in “[The Beast](#),” a new drama series for A&E, and filmed a complete season while undergoing treatment. Mr. Swayze insisted on continuing with the series. “How do you nurture a positive attitude when all the statistics say you’re a dead man?” he said to Bill Carter of The New York Times last October. “You go to work.”

The show, on which he plays an undercover [F.B.I.](#) agent, had its premiere in January and earned him admiring reviews.

A week before the series began, Mr. Swayze was the subject of a one-hour “[Barbara Walters Special](#)” on ABC, talking about his illness. “I keep my heart and my soul and my spirit open to miracles,” he told Ms. Walters. But he said he was not going to pursue

every experimental treatment that came along. If he were to “spend so much time chasing staying alive,” he said, he wouldn’t be able to enjoy the time he had left. “I want to live,” he said.

Shortly after the interview was broadcast he was hospitalized for pneumonia, a complication of chemotherapy treatment. At least one tabloid newspaper ran photographs of him in April with reports that the cancer had metastasized and that his weight had dropped to 105 pounds. Reports earlier this year that he had stopped medical treatment were denied.

Mr. Swayze rose to stardom in 1987. He had received attention in several of his early movies and in the mini-series [“North and South,”](#) but the coming-of-age film “Dirty Dancing” established him as a romantic leading man. He starred opposite [Jennifer Grey](#) as a young working-class dance instructor at a Catskills resort who proved to have more heart, integrity and sex appeal than many of the wealthy guests with whom he was forbidden to fraternize.

He exhibited similar emotional intensity in the supernatural romance “Ghost” (1990), an enormous box-office hit. His character, a loft-living yuppie banker, is murdered early in the film and spends the rest of it as a spirit, desperately trying to communicate with his fiancée ([Demi Moore](#)) with the help of a psychic ([Whoopi Goldberg](#)). No dancing was involved, but Mr. Swayze showed off his physical grace in other ways and solidified his stardom.

Mr. Swayze was proud of “Ghost,” as he told The [San Francisco Chronicle](#) in 1990. “I needed to do something that will affect the audience in a positive way, make them feel better about their lives and appreciate what they have,” he said.

Patrick Wayne Swayze was born on Aug. 18, 1952, in Houston, the son of Jesse Wayne Swayze, an engineer and rodeo cowboy, and Patsy Swayze, a dance instructor and choreographer. He began dancing as a child and often talked about being teased while growing up in Texas because of his interests. But he was also a student athlete, and his dancing career was later hampered by a football injury.

After attending San Jacinto, a community college in Texas, Mr. Swayze moved to New York to study dance, becoming a member of [Eliot Feld](#) Ballet. He made his Broadway debut in 1975 as a dancer in “Goodtime Charley” and was soon cast in the original

Broadway production of [“Grease,”](#) taking over the lead role. (He returned to Broadway almost three decades later, briefly filling in as the razzle-dazzle lawyer Billy Flynn in [“Chicago”](#) in 2003.)

He made his screen debut in “Skatetown U.S.A.” (1979), a roller-disco movie starring Scott Baio. Looking back on that film a few years later, he told the Toronto newspaper The Globe and Mail in 1984, “I saw that with not too much trouble I could become a teenybopper star, but I knew if I accepted that, it would take years to win credibility as a serious actor.”

His first notable film was [“The Outsiders”](#) (1983), a drama about teenage gangs, which starred other newcomers like [Tom Cruise](#), [Rob Lowe](#), [Matt Dillon](#) and [Emilio Estevez](#). That same year he was cast in a short-lived television series, [“Renegades,”](#) a sort of updated “Mod Squad” about young gang leaders turned deputies.

Mr. Swayze’s public profile grew steadily, particularly with his appearances in [“Red Dawn”](#) (1984), a film about small-town high school students fighting the Soviets in World War III, and in “North and South” (1985), a high-profile 12-hour mini-series in which he played a conflicted Southern soldier.

“People don’t identify with victims,” he said in an interview with The Associated Press, discussing his “North and South” character, originally written as a more passive man. “They identify with people who have the world come down on their heads and who fight to survive.”

After that, along came “Dirty Dancing” and then, just three years later, “Ghost,” with a few largely forgotten movies in between, like the violent and unmistakably sexist action movie [“Road House”](#) (1989).

During the 1990s, he was a bank-robbing surfer in [“Point Break”](#) (1991) and a drag queen with the daunting name Vida Boheme in the awkwardly titled [“To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar”](#) (1995). “To Wong Foo” earned him his third Golden Globe nomination. (The others were for “Dirty Dancing” and “Ghost.”)

His portrayal of a noble doctor in [Roland Joffé’s “City of Joy”](#) (1992) was not well received. But then, critics rarely praised his acting ability. At best he was commended for his athletic presence and stalwart demeanor.

Between 1995 and 2007 he made more than a dozen feature films, including [“Donnie Darko”](#) (2001), in which he played an obnoxious motivational speaker. In 2006 he surprised many by starring in London as the streetwise gambler Nathan Detroit in the musical [“Guys and Dolls.”](#) His last film was [“Powder Blue,”](#) a drama with [Lisa Kudrow](#) that has not yet been released.

As a young unknown, Mr. Swayze met Lisa Niemi, a fellow Houstonian, in one of his mother’s dance classes. They married in 1975, and she survives him, as do his mother; two brothers, Don and Sean; and a sister, Bambi. Another sister, Vicky, died in 1994.

Mr. Swayze said publicly more than once that he was determined not to be typecast. In a 1989 interview with The Chicago Sun-Times, he said, “The only plan I have is that every time people think they have me pegged, I’m going to come out of left field and do something unexpected.”

He also expressed concern about the dangers of Hollywood superficiality. “One of the reasons I bought my ranch was because I didn’t want to hear the hype,” he told The A.P. in 1985, referring to his horse ranch in the San Gabriel Mountains. He added, “Your horses don’t lie to you.”