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Photo Courtesy: Frank Carroll/Getty Images Nearly four decades after emerging onto the scene, Mr. T remains as iconic as ever. From his signature looks to his memorable catchphrase, the actor and former wrestler is instantly recognizable by audiences both young and old. Despite his renown, there's a lot that many people don't know about the star. Whether it be his humble beginnings or the origin of his quintessential style, Mr. T and his unique tough-quy persona are in fact quite multifaceted. The Origin of Mr. T's NameMr. T was born Lawrence Tureaud on May 21 of 1952. Born a minister's son, he and his four sisters and seven brothers all bore the surname until their father abandoned them just five years after Lawrence's birth. As an act of silent rebellion against his dad, he shortened his name to T. Now officially Mr. T, the young man formerly known as Lawrence Tero felt his new name allowed him to immediately receive the respect he deserved. All 12 Tureaud children lived in a single three-bedroom apartment in the Robert Taylor Homes of Chicago, Illinois. A public housing project in Bronzeville on the south side of the city, the building was named after the first African-American chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority (and activist) Robert Rochon Taylor. Photo Courtesy: John Vachon/National Archives and Records Administration Tureaud attended Dunbar Vocational High School. A public school that aimed to help students work toward a career, Dunbar allowed him to realize his passions for football, wrestling and martial arts. He even managed to earn the title of citywide wrestling champion two years in a row.Mr. T's Life After High SchoolThanks to his football skills, Lawrence Tureaud (now Mr. T) earned a scholarship to play ball for Prairie View, A&M University in Prairie View, Texas State/Texas State Library From there, Mr. T decided to sign up for the Army. He served in the Military Police Corps for the duration of his tour. After being discharged, he tried out for Wisconsin's NFL team, the Green Bay Packers, which was the league's third-oldest franchise. Unfortunately, a knee injury kept him from making the team. The Origin of Mr. T's JewelryHe might have been Mr. T by name, but after failing to make it into the NFL, he was far from the person he would soon become. Left with nowhere to turn, Mr. T started working as a bouncer for a club called Dingbats on Chicago's North Side. Photo Courtesy: Frank Carroll/Getty Images The number of gold chains and other pieces of jewelry left at Dingbats was astounding. Mr. T wore it all around his neck so customers could approach him if they'd lost something. He cleaned the jewelry often and even slept in it because it took over an hour to put on. Behind Mr. T's Iconic HairstyleWhen looking through an issue of National Geographic, Mr. T was floored by the hairstyles of West Africa's Mandinka warriors. Inspired by what he had seen, he decided that he, too, would adopt a similar hairstyle as a way to honor his African heritage. Photo Courtesy: LIFE/Getty Images Along with his plethora of gold chains, which he decided to continue wearing as a tribute to his enslaved ancestors even after departing Dingbats, Mr. T had fully realized the look that he's now famous for. Ironically, today the hairstyle is attributed far more to Mr. T than Mandinka warriors. Inventing Mr. T's PersonaNow in possession of the eventual-classic Mr. T moniker and looks, all he needed was the attitude. This came naturally with being a bouncer. Responsible for keeping drug dealers and users out of Dingbats, Mr. T claims to have gotten in over 200 fights without ever losing one. Photo Courtesy: Mike Slaughter/Toronto Star via Getty Images After leaving Dingbats, he became a bodyguard — a career he managed to maintain for nearly a decade. When he was just starting out, Mr. T stuck to guarding prostitutes, bankers, preachers and teachers before moving up to fashion designers, models, athletes and countless celebrities and millionaires. Mr. T's Budding Celebrity Status Almost 10 years in, Mr. T was practically a bodyguard brand name. Toward the end of his bodyguarding career, celebrities such as Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali all trusted him (and paid him anywhere from \$3,000 to \$10,000 a day) to keep them safe from harm. Photo Courtesy: NBCUniversal/Getty Images Mr. T was also susceptible to plenty of odd offerings — contracted assassinations, private investigations and debt collections by force, just to name a few. He was even offered the opportunity to become an undercover hired hitman for just shy of \$100,000 per target.Mr. Ton America's Toughest BouncerA competition on NBC's Sunday Games turned out to be the key to Mr. T's success. Subtitled America's Toughest Bouncer, the program saw contestants attempting tasks like breaking through a thick wooden door and throwing 150-pound stuntmen. Photo Courtesy: Public Domain/Good Free Photos The program culminated in a boxing match between finalists. Mr. T competed twice, winning both times. Little did he know that Sylvester Stallone, action movie superstar and creative mastermind behind the Rocky movies, was watching at home. Mr. T's skills in the ring were enough to inspire Stallone to give him a leading role in Rocky III. His Breakout RoleAt first, Sylvester Stallone only intended for Mr. T to have a few lines of dialogue in his third Rocky film — nothing more than a bit part. Once Stallone actually spent time with him, though, it was clear Mr. T belonged in the role of the primary antagonist: Clubber Lang. Photo Courtesy: Christine Loss/IMDb Stallone took some of Mr. T's quotes from America's Toughest Bouncer and repurposed them for the film, inadvertently creating the rising star's most iconic "I pity the fool" became, Mr. T on the A-TeamA year after Rocky III, Mr. T was given another leading role: that of ex-Army commando Sergeant Bosco Albert "B.A." Baracus on NBC's The A-Team (1983-1987). The show follows four men, all ex-military, on the run from the U.S. government for a crime they didn't commit. Photo Courtesy: Michael J. Jacobs/IMDb Mr. T's character was known as the tough guy of the group, always managing to use his expert mechanical skills to get them out of tough situations (despite the character's occasional dimwittedness). Mr. T would claim that only a very smart person could play such a dumb character some year. The A-Team premiered, NBC also invested in a Ruby-Spears-produced, Scooby-Doo-style cartoon starring the actor called Mister T. Playing a stylized version of himself, the animated version of Mr. T owned a gym and helped train gymnasts to solve mysteries and fight crimes alongside him. Photo Courtesy: Mister T Cartoon (Theme Song) Only 30 episodes were produced, but these 30 episodes were spread out over three seasons that aired consecutively between '83 and '86. The show proved to be one of Ruby-Spears' most successful animated productions alongside Alvin and the Chipmunks.Mr. T in D.C. CabAlso in 1983, Mr. T earned the starring role in what remains the only movie to put the actor in the spotlight solo: D.C. CabAlso in 1983, Mr. T earned the starring role and an ensemble of celebrity cameos like Gary Busey, Adam Baldwin, stand-up comedian Paul Rodriguez and bodybuilders the Barbarian Brothers. Photo Courtesy: Drew Struzan/IMDb Despite the project's modest star power and extensive marketing, it barely made back its \$12-million budget (earning just \$16 million during its run) and received middling reviews. Mr. T hasn't been given the chance to star in a film since.Mr. T's Motivational Speaking CareerGiven his hugely intimidating stature, it was only a matter of time for Mr. T to try his luck at motivational speaking. As it turns out, this was just another one of his callings in life. Debuting in 1984, Be Somebody...or Be Somebody's Fool! was very successful. Photo Courtesy: Mr.T - Be Somebody...or Be Somebody's Fool! Geared toward children, the motivational video aimed to give adolescents the confidence to love themselves and their heritage, control their anger and even dress decently without spending a fortune. Nearly half the video's running time consists of Mr. T singing encouraging songs.Mr. T's AlbumsComing off the success of Be Somebody... or Be Somebody... or Be Somebody..., the album instructed children to keep away from drugs and stay in school. Photo Courtesy: Steve Cadman/Flickr Later that year, Mr. T also put out a CD version of Be Somebody... to equally great numbers. Despite two extremely profitable releases in one year, Mr. T's albums came to an end after this (unless you count his appearance on Busta Rhymes' song "Pass the Courvoisier, Part II" in 2002).Mr. T's Professional Wrestling CareerThanks to his success across multiple fields, Mr. T was easily able to make the transition to professional wrestling in 1985. Starting out as Hulk Hogan's tag-team partner in the World Wrestlemania, Mr. T is often credited as the sole reason why Wrestlemania I succeeded. Photo Courtesy: Tech. Sgt. Sean Tobin/US Air Force His wrestlemania, Mr. T is often credited as the sole reason why Wrestlemania, Mr. T is often credited as the sole reason why Wrestlemania I succeeded. Photo Courtesy: high-profile matches against people like "Rowdy" Roddy Piper and "Cowboy" Bob Orton. Mr. T was so beloved during this time that he was honored with an induction into the WWE Hall of Fame in 2014.Mr. T cerealWhen a celebrity is big, many corporations leap at the opportunity to license the celeb's name and likeness. In Mr. T's case, that meant allowing the Quaker Oats Company to create Mr. T Cereal in 1984. In fact, it was the very first cereal the company ever manufactured. Photo Courtesy: BrokenSphere/Wikipedia Fortified with iron and vitamin B, Mr. T Cereal was a crispy, sweet corn and oat cereal that was essentially a knockoff of Cap'n Crunch — it shared a similar flavor and texture, right down to its identical golden color. A packet of stickers could always be found inside. The Lake Forest Chainsaw MassacreMr. T's notoriety wasn't limited exclusively to the big screen or TV. No, as a matter of fact, at least to his neighbors in Lake Forest, Illinois, Mr. T was just as intimidating and destructive in real life. Photo Courtesy: acethom/Pixabay In 1987, Mr. T angered fellow Lake Forest residents and garnered national media attention for his decision to cut down over 100 oak trees in the area surrounding his home. Mr. T owned the land — it all fell within the boundaries of his estate — but many were displeased with the celebrity's outright disregard for nature. Mr. T on T. and T.Piggybacking on the success of The A-Team and Mister T, Canada chose to enlist the actor for a show of its own in the wake of The A-Team and 1990 and tallied up 65 episodes. Photo Courtesy: Ben Mark Holzberg/IMDb The action-packed and socially conscious program followed Mr. T as T.S. Turner and Alex Amini as Amy Taler. After Turner was framed for a crime and Taler helped set him free, the two teamed up to help stop crime as cunning private detectives. Mr. T's Cancer ScareDue to health problems, the 1990s saw Mr. T drastically reduce his public appearances. Diagnosed with cancer — specifically T-cell lymphoma — in 1995, the actor limited himself to the occasional television commercial. With a schedule like this, Mr. T could spend a day or two shooting an ad and the rest of the week focusing on recovering. Photo Courtesy: Gabriel Caponetti/Wikipedia Due to his lighthearted nature disguised underneath his tough-guy persona, it's not surprising to find Mr. T would often joke about his diagnosis. The irony was not lost on him that his specific type of cancer was called "T-cell lymphoma in the mid-90s, Mr. T continued to book television commercial on top of television commercial instead of returning to acting. As it turns out, the laid-back nature of advertisement shoots was preferable for the actor (then in his late 40s by 2000). Photo Courtesy: Kuba Bozanowski/Wikipedia This decision was another genius move for Mr. T. His many commercial appearances crystalized his status as a pop culture icon for a whole new generation of fans who knew his name from Snickers, World of Warcraft and Fuze Iced Tea ads, among many other brands.Mr. T's Cameo AppearancesDespite focusing on commercials, Mr. T still managed to prioritize a TV or film cameo here and there. Reducing his participation to mere walk-on roles only furthered his status as a timeless icon. Mr. T added another skill to his résumé: impeccable comedic timing. Photo Courtesy: Rico Torres/IMDb From Spy Hard to Inspector Gadget and Blossom to Malcolm in the Middle, Mr. T would appear as himself and earn huge laughs. Children who were born after Rocky III's release by nearly a decade knew Mr. T's name practically as well as their parents did. Mr. T just couldn't fail.Mr. T's Chains Come OffWhen the U.S. was hit by Hurricane Katrina, no one could have imagined the wide-ranging scope of the damage. With homes and businesses destroyed across the coast, the natural disaster was a tragedy. The nation, including Mr. T, stopped everything to help the victims. Photo Courtesy: U.S. Coast Guard, Petty Officer 2nd Class Kyle Niemi/Wikipedia Seeing so many people lose everything they've ever owned impacted the star in ways he never anticipated. Looking down and seeing his hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of jewelry now rubbed him the wrong way, so he decided to shed this trademark feature of his appearance once and for all.Mr. T's Reality ShowDuring the commercial- and cameo-fueled Mr. T renaissance of the mid-2000s, TV Land — the cable network geared toward nostalgic older audiences — decided to lure the actor back to the silver screen. Instead of acting, though, TV Land convinced Mr. T to transition to reality television. Photo Courtesy: TV Land/YouTube Titled I Pity the Fool, the reality program followed Mr. T as he traveled the country solving problems and giving advice. Although crafted in a similar vein to his motivational-speaking content, I Pity the Fool just didn't seem to resonate with contemporary audiences. It was canceled after six short episodes. Mr. T in 21st Century FilmsWith his commercial appearances still going strong but his television appearances slowing to a crawl, studio executives tried to bring Mr. T back to the feature-film industry. First, the actor was offered a cameo in The A-Team's feature film adaptation alongside his co-stars, but he turned it down. Ultimately, the show's stars didn't even make the final cut. Photo Courtesy: Laura Pearson-Smith/IMDb In 2009, Mr. T actually accepted a feature-film appearance: the role of Officer Earl Devereaux in the animated film Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs. However, Mr. T found fame far outside the boundaries of the United States. In fact, the actor is quite famous in the United Kingdom. As a result, British television network BBC Three gave the star his own clip show from 2011 to 2013. Photo Courtesy: Sports Fools/YouTube Titled World's Craziest Fools, the clip show features Mr. T as the presenter of all kinds of ridiculous and hilarious internet videos and CCTV footage. As you might be able to surmise by the title, the clips showcased people making fools of themselves (intentionally or not). Mr. T's Failed Projects Mr. T's name has been attached to throughout the years, not every one of them was lucky enough to be successful. Quite a few never even made it past the drawing board. Photo Courtesy: DIY Network One of the most surprising instances was I Pity the Tool, a show on DIY Network following Mr. T renovating homes — it lasted one episode. Another is Mr. T: The Video Game, which was imagined as a cartoonish take on the actor's life that would see him fighting Nazis across the world. It was never completed and was subsequently abandoned.Mr. T on Dancing With the StarsMr. T is undoubtedly a huge star, so it makes sense that he was eventually sought out for ABC's hit dance competition series Dancing With the Stars in 2017. One of the last high-profile jobs for the '80s superstar, Mr. T was partnered up with Kym Herjavec during the show's 24th season. Photo Courtesy: ABC/YouTube Competing alongside Saturday Night Live alum Chris Kattan, Olympic skater Nancy Kerrigan and actress Charo, Mr. T didn't make it very far into the show. He and his partner were voted off third, ending up in 10th place after just a few episodes of competition.Mr. T's Later YearsNow in his late 60s, Mr. T lives the life he deserves. It's the final transition for him: After a lifetime of hard work across film, television, sports and a son (the latter from a previous marriage). One of his daughters makes her living as a comedian, performing under the name Erica Tureaud.Mr. T TodayIn 2019, not much is seen or heard from Mr. T. He experienced a brief resurgence in popularity when the Snapchat-style Mr. T App was released in the mid-2010s, but — as with most things online — the chatter died down in no time at all. Photo Courtesy: Giles Turnbull/App Store Truthfully, Mr. T has disappeared from the spotlight simply because he chose to. Being a present father and a loving husband is a noble goal, especially considering the fact that Mr. T was robbed of a father-son relationship when his father left his family all the way back in the 1970s. Where to Find Him on Social MediaThe best (and only) way to keep up with Mr. T today is to follow him on Twitter (@MrT) or YouTube. As is the case with many celebrities, social media provides the opportunity to receive updates from the man himself on a regular basis. Photo Courtesy: @MrT/Twitter It's here that Mr. T will probably be the most active going forward — at least until the next Mr. T-aissance, whenever that may be. Not to mention, his tweets are truly quite enjoyable, even if he doesn't post that often. In the end, you shouldn't pity him — Mr. T is doing just fine. MORE FROM FAQTOIDS.COM

