

WELCH, RAQUEL (1940–)

Jo Raquel Tejada was born in Chicago. Her father, Armand C. Tejada, a Bolivian-born aerospace engineer, relocated the family to California, where Raquel was raised under an ethos of American assimilation. English was spoken in the home and the family lived in non-Latino neighborhoods. As a child, movies served as a form of escape from a household torn apart by marital strife. Welch's favorite movie was the fantasy, *The Red Shoes*. As a teen-ager, Welch's beauty and talent garnered numerous pageant awards: Miss Contour, Miss La Jolla, Miss Photogenic Teen, and Miss San Diego. She married in 1960, colored her hair blond, and changed her last name to Welch. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Welch established a career in the movies as a sex symbol in films like *Fantastic Voyage* and *One Million Years B.C.* Performing multiple roles as a comedienne, Welch costarred opposite numerous leading men, became a favorite star of film and television directors and appeared in a number of screen and television films. In 1975 she won the Golden Globe for the role of Constance in *The Three Musketeers*, and in 1981, she surprised critics with her successful Broadway debut as the headliner in the hit musical *Woman of the Year*. Reawakening to her Latina identity Raquel Welsh has made important contributions towards promoting a Latino presence in television. Embarking on a busy acting career in films and television into the twenty-first century, she played a leading role as Aunt Dora in *An American Family*, the first PBS dramatic series with a Latino theme. Raquel Welch authored a best-selling fitness book stressing the virtues of yoga and nutrition and has created her own line of wigs and beauty products.