



Joe Shere, *Jayne Mansfield and Sophia Loren at Romanoff's*, Beverly Hills, CA, 1958

## The Picture | The Story

It seems nearly everyone is familiar with this photograph of Sophia Loren and Jayne Mansfield. In many ways, this is the definition of a truly iconic, memorable image. We know the photograph so well, two Hollywood bombshells at the height of their fame, and Sophia – just for a split second looking down with scorn or contempt at Jayne's infamous attributes. Like most iconic photographs, the story behind the image is just as incredible as the image itself.

This photograph, taken by Joe Shere, ran in numerous magazines and newspapers in 1958, and continues to appear in publications even today.

I first met Joe Shere in 1986 when I co-curated "Masters of Starlight", an exhibition of Hollywood photography at LACMA. This exhibition was one of the first museum shows to recognize the formidable influence of Hollywood portraiture and Hollywood documentary photography within the larger history and evolution of Fine Art Photography.

While collaborating on the exhibition, Joe Shere mentioned that he had worked as a photographer in Hollywood for well over 50 years. He said that although he took countless behind-the-scenes photographs during his career, the image of Sophia Loren and Jayne

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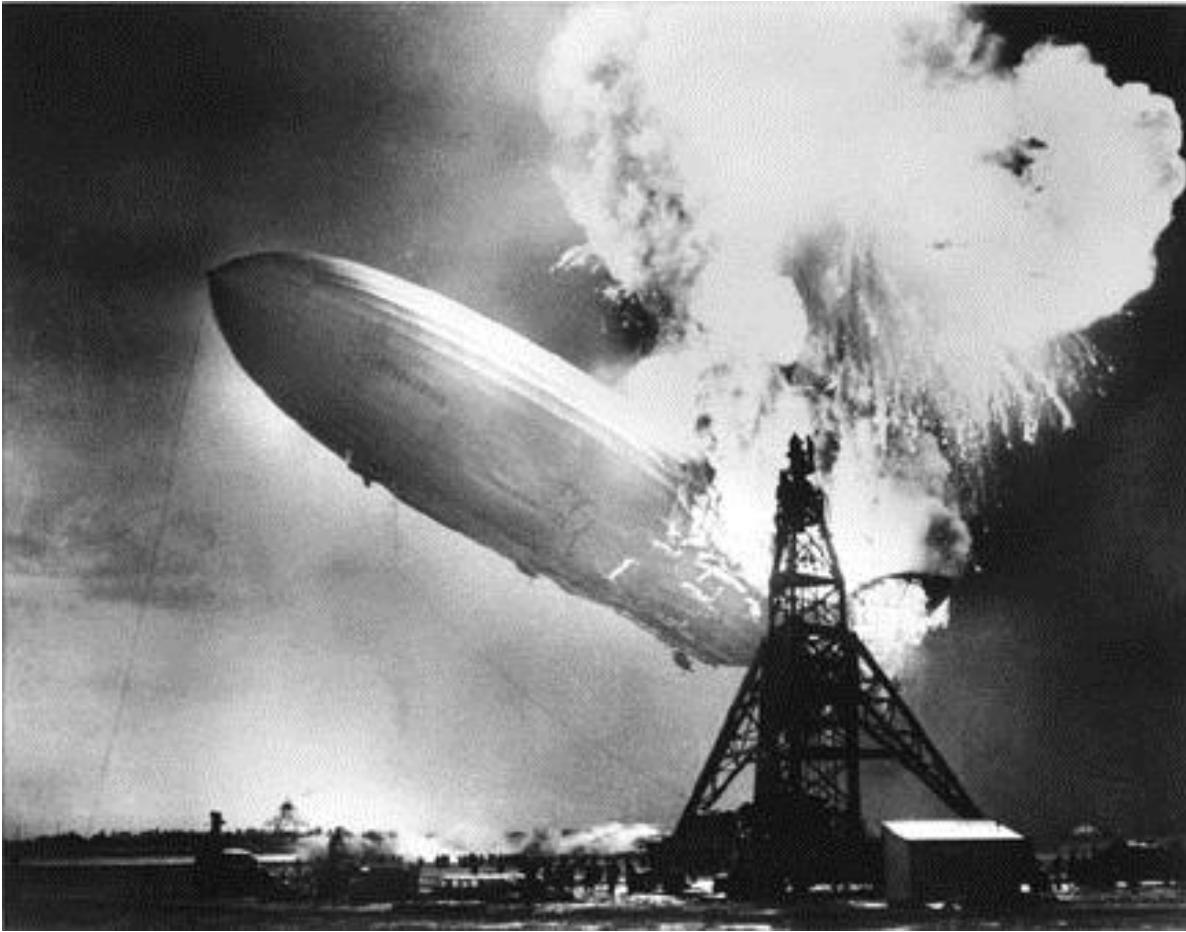
Mansfield will be the one photograph everyone will remember. This has, of course, proven to be true.

Like so many memorable photographs – timing, chance, and using one’s ingenuity is critical. As always, luck can be a crucial element to catch that indelible and unpredictable moment.



*Joe Shere, Marilyn Monroe (in Shorts), DATE*

After I got to know Joe better, he told me about his brother, Sam, also a photographer who was retired in Florida at the time. Joe told me his brother, Sam, also made a famous photograph. I couldn't imagine what Sam's famous picture could be. Joe said, "Did you ever see a photograph of the Hindenburg Airship exploding?" Sam Shere's photograph, of the blimp engulfed in flames won the best publishers award for the best news photograph of 1937. His photograph, taken that fateful night in New Jersey, became a record of a major moment in the history of American photojournalism.



Samuel Shere, *Hindenburg Explosion, Lake Hurse, New Jersey, 1937*

Joe Shere's photograph of Sophia Loren and Jayne Mansfield, taken 22 years later and on the other side of the country, became another famous photograph in American history.

David Fahey

Joe tells his story this way:

*Dear Dave: Here's the description of what took place in 1958 when I took the Famous Classic Mansfield/Loren photo:*

*Famous restaurant owner Mike Romanoff (catering at the time to all the top Hollywood stars) put the word out to the studios and ALL photographers in Hollywood, that Sophia Loren and Jayne Mansfield had a reservation for lunch that day.*

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*At the time, Sophia was considered the sex symbol of Hollywood, while Jayne Mansfield was showing her breasts and the rest of her body to any and all magazines all over the world for the sake of publicity.*

*Sophia came with a date who was sitting next to her. Suddenly, Sophia's date left his chair – for whatever reason – and when Jayne saw that, she jumped at the opportunity to grab the empty seat and show off her breasts and smile.*

*ALL of the 30 or more photographers started to shoot wildly – hundreds of shots – but, ALL MISSED THE CLASSIC SHOT – ONLY Joe Shere made it in that split second – a shot many people and many magazines tried to duplicate since, with models and celebrities, all without my permission, of course.*

*Joe Shere*