

Shyer, Charles. "A Dazzling New Memoir Reveals Elizabeth Taylor's Intimate Side." *Vanity Fair*. (February 16, 2016).

VF HOLLYWOOD

THE GOLDEN AGE FEBRUARY 16, 2016 11:01 AM

A Dazzling New Memoir Reveals Elizabeth Taylor's Intimate Side



Photograph by Firooz Zahedi.

Firooz Zahedi's *My Elizabeth* is a chronicle of the star's jet-set-era exploits.

BY CHARLES SHYER

He was the quintessential Hollywood movie star. Glamorous, gorgeous—and gifted. Her eyes were the most famous in the world: an unforgettable violet blue. When I was a kid growing up in Southern California, every magazine on every newsstand had Elizabeth Taylor on its cover. Richard Burton was usually by her side—but no one stopped at the newsstand to gawk at him. The couple starred in films together—and broke up marriages together. They fell in and out of love—mostly with each other and had screaming knockdowns on tarmacs around the world. Liz and Dick weren't just the first wildly glam jet-setters—their life together was the first reality show.

By 40, Taylor was an icon. Still enchanting men, she was the first actress to shatter Hollywood's notoriously thick glass ceiling: for *Cleopatra*—a film that, ironically, almost bankrupted 20th Century Fox—she was to be paid what was then the astronomical sum of \$1 million dollars.

Firooz Zahedi's spectacular new book, *My Elizabeth*, has changed all that. Filled with dazzling images and a wealth of intimate detail, this revealing photographic memoir should be on every coffee table.

They first met—by chance—in 1976, in Washington, D.C., when Firooz was a boyish, handsome art student, and she was a fading movie queen romantically involved with Ardeshir Zahedi, the ambassador to Iran and Firooz's cousin. His new friend Elizabeth saw the young man's talent long before anyone else—including himself. Seized by wanderlust and perhaps even a bit smitten, Firooz slung a Nikon around his neck and spent much of the next two decades circumnavigating the globe, becoming a world-class photographer and capturing blink-of-the-eye moments of Taylor and a coterie of friends. Like Liz, many had achieved single name status: Warhol, Halston, Antonioni, a Rothschild or two. And entering and exiting with impeccable timing, her big love, Sir Richard.

Firooz's photos of "his" Elizabeth—many of which we see here for the first time—are stunning expressions of the unconscious *pas de deux* between artist and subject; then artist and artist—and, ultimately, artist and friend.

This charming, often witty recollection casts Elizabeth Taylor in a role we've never seen her play. She's cool, unpretentious, and a ton of fun. Somebody you'd love to hang with on a rainy Sunday afternoon, lazing on a plush sofa, sipping Haut Brion and watching old movies on TCM...oh so thrilled to have found a place in this legend's sun.







