

Eva Perón (aka Evita, actress, and politician)

Born María Eva Duarte on May 7, 1919, in Los Toldos, Argentina, Eva Perón was a leading political figure in her native country as first lady and wife to President **Juan Perón**. She grew up poor, dreaming of becoming an actress. Perón and her sister, Erminda, often made up little performances together in their youth. Her mother, Juana Ibaguren, had four children with her father, Juan Duarte.

Eva Perón moved to Buenos Aires to become an actress. There, she found work with a number of theater companies. In 1937, Perón landed her first film role in *Segundos Afuera* and got a contract to perform on the radio. She continued to work in stage productions as well over the next few years. Perón was about 20 years old when she started her own entertainment business, the Company of the Theater of the Air, which produced radio programs.

Perón's life changed dramatically when she married Juan Perón, a colonel and government official, in 1945. He became president of Argentina the following year, and his wife proved to be a powerful political influence. Eva Perón used her position as first lady to fight for causes she believed in, including **women's suffrage and improving the lives of the poor**. She also unofficially ran the ministries of health and labor in her husband's government. Perón became a legendary figure in Argentine politics. A skilled speaker, she was adored by the poor citizens she worked hard to help

Perón made her last public appearance in June 1952, at her husband's second inauguration. The following month, she succumbed to her illness: Perón died of cervical cancer in Buenos Aires on July 26, 1952. She was given a funeral fit for a head of state, showing how much public support she had from the Argentine people at the time.

Since her death, Perón's life continues to fascinate people around the world. The story of a poor girl who became a prominent political power has been the subject of countless books, films and plays.