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First lady's mother dies at age 91 in her sleep

Associated Press

PHOENIX, Ariz. — Edith Luckett Davis, 91, first lady Nancy Reagan's mother and a former actress who performed with theatrical greats like George M. Cohan, died in her sleep Monday.

Davis died at her home at 12:15 p.m. of a cerebral thrombosis, a blood clot in the brain which is a form of stroke, the White House said.

President and Mrs. Reagan were scheduled to fly here from Washington today, a White House statement said. The president was to fly back to Washington tonight, then rejoin his wife for the funeral.

The Reagans will make arrangements today for the funeral, but no date has been fixed, White House spokesman Ben Jarratt said this morning. "The best guess is Friday, but that's not official," he said.

Mrs. Reagan, who returned to the White House on Thursday after breast cancer surgery Oct. 17, was very upset Monday, said her press secretary, Elaine Crispen.

"She's going through some old photographs of her mother. (She's) very teary," Crispen said.

Mrs. Reagan, who had visited her



Nancy Reagan shares a moment with her mother, Edith Davis, in a 1986 photo. Associated Press

mother several times a year, last saw her on Aug. 13. Davis had been ill for years, and had round-the-clock medical care at her condominium, Crispen said.

"She died peacefully in her sleep," the spokeswoman said.

Davis was the widow of neurosurgeon Loyal Davis, the first lady's stepfather who died in August 1982 at age 86. The couple moved to Phoenix from Chicago in 1963, when Davis retired as head of the surgery department at Northwestern University.

Like her mother, Mrs. Reagan gave up the stage to devote her life to her husband.

Edith Luckett was born July 16, 1896, the ninth and last child of Sarah,

Whitlock and Charles Edward Luckett of Petersburg, Va. The family moved to Washington, where she grew up.

Davis got her first break in acting at age 14, when her brother Joe got her a job in a theater he ran, Mrs. Reagan wrote.

The young actress was married briefly to New Jersey businessman Kenneth Robbins, but the marriage broke up shortly after Nancy's birth.

Davis was forced to tour in plays to support herself and her daughter, and entrusted Nancy to her sister in Bethesda, Md. She was able to spend time with her daughter only during prolonged appearances on Broadway.

In 1929, she married Loyal Davis, and he adopted 14-year-old Nancy.

Nancy Reagan's mother dies in Arizona at age 91

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Edith Luckett Davis, the mother of first lady Nancy Reagan, died of a stroke yesterday at her home in Phoenix, Ariz., the White House announced. She was 91.

Davis, a onetime actress and the widow of Chicago neurosurgeon Loyal Davis, had been ailing for several years.

The White House said she died at 2:15 p.m. EST of a cerebral thrombosis, a blood clot in the brain and a form of stroke.

President Reagan was told about Davis' death at 3 p.m. by Nancy Reagan's press secretary, Elaine Crispen, as he concluded an interview. He immediately went to the residence to inform his wife and stayed with her the rest of the afternoon.

Nancy Reagan, who underwent breast cancer surgery on Oct. 17 and returned to the White House last Thursday, was described by Crispen as "very upset."

Crispen said Davis "died peacefully in her sleep."

Nancy Reagan last saw her mother on Aug. 13 before joining her husband at their ranch for a summer vacation. She visited with her mother, who has been confined to a wheel chair for several years, a number of times a year.

The first lady "called nightly. She checked on her every day and if her mother was asleep, she talked to the girls who cared for her," Crispen said.

President Reagan and the first lady will travel to Phoenix today. Reagan will return to Washington



Edith Davis

Onetime actress had been ailing for several years

this evening while the first lady remains in Arizona. The president will return to Phoenix at the end of the week when funeral arrangements are complete.

Davis had lived in Phoenix since 1963, where she retired with her husband. They moved to the Southwest after Davis retired as head of the surgery department at Northwestern University.

He died in August 1982 of congestive heart failure at age 86.

Edith Davis, often known by her nickname, "Lucky," was born on July 16, 1896. She was the ninth and last child of Sarah Whitlock and Charles Edward Luckett of Petersburg, Va.

Her career on the stage included appearances in New York with George M. Cohan and Spencer Tracy, who later became a close friend. She also worked with Walter Huston, Zasu Pitts and Louis Calhern.

The young actress was married briefly to Kenneth Robbins, a New Jersey businessman, but the union broke up shortly after Nancy's birth and the couple was later divorced. She was married on May 21, 1929, to Davis, who adopted Nancy when she was 14.