

## **My Little Margie Notes**

*My Little Margie* premiered on CBS as a summer replacement for *I Love Lucy* on June 16, 1952. In a first of its kind move, the series aired original episodes on CBS Radio, concurrently with the television broadcasts from December of 1952 through August of 1955. Gale Storm and Charles Farrell starred with her goofy boyfriend Freddie (played by Gil Stratton, Jr.), neighboring friend Mrs. Odetts (Verna Felton) and hateful spiteful old whip-cracking boss man Mr. Honeywell (Will Wright). The supporting players on radio were not the same people on the television series.

In March of 1952 a pilot for the series, which never aired, was shot with Mona Freeman playing the role of Margie opposite Charles Farrell. The original choice for the Margie role had been between Mona Freeman and Diana Lynn. After Mona Freeman bowed out of the series the title role was offered next to Wanda Hendrix. She, along with Diana Lynn were signed to CBS-TV's parent company Paramount Pictures. Both Lynn and Hendrix passed on this series.

My Little Margie (season 1) (CBS/NBC) (1952-1953)

My Little Margie (season 2) (NBC) (1953-1954)

My Little Margie (season 3) (NBC) (1954-1955)

**126 episodes** 30 minutes black & white

### **Broadcast History:**

June 16, 1952 - September 1952 - CBS Monday at 9.00PM

October - November - 1952 - NBC Saturday at 7.30PM

January - July 1953 - CBS Thursday at 10.00PM

September 9, 1953 - August 24, 1955 - NBC Wednesday at 8.30PM

From July of 1954 to November of 1964, a series of *My Little Margie* comic books were produced by Charlton Publications.

Both *My Little Margie* and *Oh Susanna* were filmed at the Hal Roach Studios. Opened in 1919, the Hal Roach Studios produced comedy films with many of the most memorable performers of all-time. Harold Lloyd was the first star at the Hal Roach Studios. In 1922, *Our Gang* began and was followed by Laurel & Hardy in 1927. Charley Chase was a major star with Hal Roach from 1921 to 1936. During the late 1930's and through the 1940's, the studio produced streamliners (aka short features). One film produced by the Hal Roach Studios in 1939, *Of Mice and Men* was nominated for four Academy Awards including Best Picture. The following year, another Hal Roach Studios production, *One Million B. C.* was nominated for two Academy Awards. In the 1950's, the studio turned to television production until it closed. *Dime With A Halo* was the final film produced at the Hal Roach Studios in 1963. The studio was demolished later that year.

### **Episode for class:**

Corpus Delecti (Aired March 23, 1955)

Corpus Delecti utilized props in this episode from the Hal Roach Studios that could be seen in Laurel & Hardy films such as the Dean's portrait from *A Chump At Oxford* and the collapsing chair from *The Laurel-Hardy Murder Case*. Bert Jordan, who was the film editor for this television episode, was also the film editor for *A Chump At Oxford*.

**Gale Storm** (Margie Albright) - was born Josephine Owaissa Cottle in Bloomington, Texas. Storm's elder sister, Lois, gave her baby sister the middle name "Owaissa", which was a Norridgewock Native American word meaning "bluebird".

When she was 17, her teachers urged her to enter a contest on Gateway to Hollywood, which was broadcast from the CBS Radio studios in Hollywood. First prize was a one-year contract with a movie studio. She won and was immediately given the stage name Gale Storm.

She made several films for the RKO Radio Pictures and worked steadily in low-budget films. In 1941, Storm sang in several soundies which were three-minute musicals produced for "movie jukeboxes".

Storm acted and sang in Monogram Pictures' Frankie Darro series, and had roles in other Monogram features with the East Side Kids, Edgar Kennedy and the Three Stooges. She played the lead in the studio's most elaborate productions and shared top billing in Monogram's *The Crime Smasher*.

Gale Storm was also a recording artist and had several hits. She headlined in Las Vegas and appeared in numerous stage plays. Storm recorded for five years with Dot Records.

In 1950, Storm made her television debut in *Hollywood Premiere Theatre*. Then from 1952 to 1955, she starred in *My Little Margie*. In 1956, she starred in another situation comedy, *The Gale Storm Show* (Oh! Susanna), featuring another silent movie star, ZaSu Pitts. The show ran for 126 episodes on CBS and ABC between 1956 and 1960. She would go on to appear regularly on other television programs in the 1950's and 1960's. Storm also made occasional television appearances from 1979 to 1989.

Gale Storm has three stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for her contributions to television at 1680 Vine Street, recordings at 1519 Vine Street and radio at 6119 Hollywood Blvd.

**Charles Farrell** (Vern Albright) - was born in South Walpole, Massachusetts. He began his motion picture career as an extra for Paramount Pictures in films such as *The Hunchback Of Notre Dame* and *The Ten Commandments*.

With Fox Studios, he was teamed up with Janet Gaynor in *7th Heaven*. They went on to star opposite one another in more than a dozen films in the late 1920's and into the sound films of the early 1930's.

In 1934, he and Ralph Bellamy opened the Palm Springs Racquet Club in Palm Springs, California. Farrell sold his interest in the Racquet club in 1959 for \$1.2 million and returned as club operator in 1965 when it was sold again.

He appeared several times on radio on *The Jack Benny Program*, On television, he played Gale Storm's father on *My Little Margie* between 1952 and 1955. In 1956, he starred in *The Charlie Farrell Show*, where he played a fictionalized version of himself as the owner of a Racquet Club.

Charles Farrell was awarded two stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1960, located at 7021 Hollywood Boulevard for motion pictures and 1617 Vine Street for television.

**Wille Best** (Charlie) - was born in Sunflower, Mississippi. He appeared in more than one hundred films during the 1930's and 1940's. He starred alongside some of the great comedians in motion picture including the Marx Brothers, Bob Hope, Laurel and Hardy plus three films with Shirley Temple.

Willie Best was hired by producer Hal Roach, who regarded Best as one of the greatest talents he had ever met. He worked almost exclusively for Roach in 1950's television programs such as the Stu Erwin sitcom *The Trouble With Father*, *My Little Margie*, *Waterfront* and a Christmas episode of *Racket Squad*, where he played a straight character role without comedy.

Mitchell Leisen, who directed Willie Best in *Suddenly It's Spring*, described him as "the most natural actor I've ever seen." Bob Hope referred to Willie Best, his comedic co-star in *The Ghost Breakers*, as one of the finest talents he had ever worked with.

**Don Hayden** (Freddie Wilson) - was the son of character actor Harry Hayden. His best remembered role was as Freddie Wilson, boyfriend of Gale Storm in *My Little Margie*. He made only 28 appearances, many of them uncredited, in a 14 year career. His final two roles were in episodes of *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp* in 1957 and 1958.

**Michael Fox** (Roland Roberts) - was born Myron Melvin Fox in Yonkers, New York. He began acting in stage plays in southern California some time in 1945.

Some of his early television work was in *The Adventures of Superman* and *Science Fiction Theatre*. He made guest appearances on both versions of *The Twilight Zone* in 1959 and 1985. Fox was featured regularly on *Perry Mason*, *Falcon Crest* and in over 300 episodes of *The Bold and The Beautiful* soap opera.

**Ruby Goodwin** (Housekeeper) - was born in Du Quoin, Illinois. Behind the camera, Goodwin was the personal secretary and publicist to actress Hattie McDaniel from 1936 to 1951. She also worked for Ethel Waters. In 1935, she won a poetry award at the Los Angeles Festival of Arts. Goodwin also wrote a musical, *American Rhapsody* in 1942, a series of radio scripts and a novel.

In the 1940's, she began acting on stage in several Los Angeles productions. During her six year acting career in films and television, she appeared in episodes of *The Loretta Young Show*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *The Adventures of Jim Bowie* and *General Electric Theater*.

As Ruby Berkley, she married Lee Goodwin in 1924. They had five children together. She was named California's Mother of the Year in 1955.

**El Brendel** (George) - Elmer Goodfellow Brendel was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He entered vaudeville in 1913 as a comedian and married his vaudeville partner. He developed a character as a good-natured, simple Swede which was one he would play on stage and in films for the rest of his career.

In 1926, he appeared in eight films there over the next two years. He played the comic relief in *Wings* in 1927 with Clara Bow and Buddy Rogers.

In sound films, Brendel was the star comedian in *New Movietone Follies of 1930*, *The Big Trail* with John Wayne and the Gershwin musical *Delicious*. In 1936, El Brendel made his debut at Columbia Pictures in a pair of two-reel comedies. Producer Jules White liked Brendel's act and hired him for a series of comedies in 1941. By 1945, Brendel had gone back to vaudeville, returning to the screen only on occasion.

In 1950, Brendel recorded four numbers for Imperial Records: Frankie And Johnny, Hulda, Pinch Of Snoose and Yumpin' Yiminy. During this time, he and his wife, Flo Bert, appeared on television variety shows such as *You Asked For It* with Art Baker. He also appeared in a few television series such as *Cowboy G-Men*, *My Little Margie* and *Perry Mason*. His final film was *Laffing Time* in 1959.

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## **The Gale Storm Show - Oh, Susanna**

Aired from September 29, 1956 to March 24, 1960.  
There were 126 episodes in this series.

### **Episode For Class:**

It's Murder My Dear - (Aired January 31, 1959)

**ZaSu Pitts** (Elvira Nugent) - was born in Parsons, Kansas, the third of four children. The names of her father's sisters, Eliza and Susan, were the basis for the name "ZaSu". When Pitts was nine years old in 1903, her family moved to Santa Cruz, California. Her childhood home at 208 Lincoln Street still stands today.

Pitts made her stage debut in 1914 in school and local community theater in Santa Cruz. One of her earliest film roles was in the silent film *A Little Princess* from 1917 starring Mary Pickford.

The most impressive and greatest role of her career was in Erich von Stroheim's 7½ hour drama *Greed* from 1924.

During the 1930's, Pitts worked in radio on programs such as *Fibber McGee and Molly* along with guest appearances on variety shows with Bing Crosby, Al Jolson, W.C. Fields and Rudy Vallee. During her days at the Hal Roach Studios, she and Thelma Todd made 17 short comedies together in their Todd & Pitts series from 1931 to 1933. Through the 1950's and early 1960's, she could be seen television programs such as *Screen Director's Playhouse*, *Private Secretary*, *Burke's Law* and *Perry Mason*. Her final film appearance in *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* was released in November of 1963, five months after her death.

ZaSu Pitts received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame located at 6554 Hollywood Blvd. on February 8, 1960 for her contribution to motion pictures. She was also nominated as Best Supporting Actress as a Continuing Character in a Comedy Series for *The Gale Storm Show: Oh! Susanna* in 1959.

**Roy Roberts** (Captain Simon P. Huxley) - was born Roy Barnes Jones in Tampa, Florida.

In May of 1931, he appeared on Broadway shortly before making his motion picture debut in a 1936 two-reel comedy titled *Gold Bricks*, released by 20th Century-Fox. Back on Broadway, he was in productions of *Twentieth Century*, *My Sister Eileen* and *Carnival in Flanders*.

After appearances on *My Little Margie*, he could be seen on several television series over the following years. In addition to playing the ship's captain for four years on *Oh! Susanna*, Roberts was regularly on *The Lucy Show*, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Petticoat Junction*, *Bewitched*, *Gunsmoke* and *McHale's Navy*.

In motion pictures, Roberts was in *House Of Wax*, *Chinatown* and *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* to name a few. His final film role was in *The Strongest Man In The World* in 1975.

**James Fairfax** (Cedric) - was born in Scarborough, Yorkshire, England. His appearances in British cinema and television took place at a time when the industry was experiencing significant growth and transformation. He was known for his character roles portraying figures of authority or as an English gentleman with a natural grace and authenticity.

During his 13 year career in the film industry in America, his most prominent roles in television were on *Oh Susanna* and *Tamar Of The Jungle*. A few of his movie appearances were in *Mrs. Mike* and *Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

**Boris Karloff** (Himself) - was born William Henry Pratt at 36 Forest Hill Road, Dulwich, Surrey (now in London), England. Pratt began appearing in theatrical performances in 1911. He chose Boris Karloff as his stage name. Karloff always said he chose the first name "Boris" because it sounded foreign and exotic and that "Karloff" was a family name. However Karloff's daughter, Sara, publicly denied any knowledge of any Slavic forebears "Karloff".

When he arrived in Hollywood, Karloff appeared in small roles in several silent films. His first confirmed on-screen role was in a film serial, *The Lightning Raider* in 1919 with Pearl White. His first major role was in a film serial, *The Hope Diamond Mystery* in 1920.

It was Lon Chaney who told Karloff "to find something different that will set you apart and is different from anything someone else has done or is willing to do and do it better". He had acted in 81 films before being discovered by James Whale and cast as the monster in *Frankenstein* in 1931. In the coming years, horror films would become Karloff's trademark.

In television, he made numerous appearances and hosted his own series two times, *The Veil* and *Thriller*. Boris Karloff has two stars on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame: for television located at 6664 Hollywood Blvd. and for motion pictures located at 1737 Vine Street. Both stars were dedicated on February 8, 1960.

**Frank Cady** (The Director) - was born in Susanville, California. He studied journalism and drama at Stanford University and served an apprenticeship at the Westminster Theater in London, appearing in four plays. In England, he made an early television appearance on the BBC in late 1938. He also worked as an announcer and news broadcaster at various California radio stations.

Cady appeared on many television series throughout his 40 year career. He was Doc Williams in 91 episodes of *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, Sam Drucker in 168 episodes of *Petticoat Junction* and the same character in 142 episodes of *Green Acres* and 10 episodes of *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

His final acting role was in the television movie *Return To Green Acres* in 1990. In a 1995 interview, Cady spoke of his television career: "You get typecast. I'm remembered for those shows and not for some pretty good acting jobs I did other times. I suppose I ought to be grateful for that, because otherwise I wouldn't be remembered at all. I've got to be one of the luckiest guys in the world."

**Tom Kennedy** (Gate Guard) - For over 50 years, from 1915 to 1965, he appeared in over 400 films and television series. While he appeared in many comedy short films with Edgar Kennedy, there was no relation between the two men. While he had several dramatic roles, Kennedy is best remembered for his appearances in comedies with The Marx Brothers, W. C. Fields, Mabel Normand, Shemp Howard, El Brendel, Laurel and Hardy and The Three Stooges.

**Harry "Snub" Pollard** (Stagehand) - was born Harold Fraser in Melbourne, Australia. By 1915, he was appearing in uncredited roles in movies, such as Charlie Chaplin's 1915 short *By The Sea*. In later years, Pollard claimed Hal Roach had discovered him while he was performing on stage in Los Angeles. During his days at the Hal Roach Studios, Pollard starred in several silent short comedies, most notably *It's A Gift* (1923) where he plays an inventor of unique devices.

During his nearly 50 year career, Pollard made 621 appearances in films and television. His most memorable scene is an uncredited one when Gene Kelly hands Pollard his umbrella at the end of his *Singing In The Rain* song and dance in the film of the same name.

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## REFERENCES

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