

## **JULY 2, 2019**

**Charlie Hall** - was born on August 19, 1899 in Birmingham, England. He was the second of eight children born to Thomas and Maria Hall. As a young man, Charlie learned to be a carpenter. Around 1914, he got a job at the Metropolitan Railway Carriage & Wagon Company, Ltd., a company that eventually closed in 2005.

On January 24, 1919, Charlie Hall arrived in New York. By the early 1920's, he was headed to Hollywood. According to John Ulah, author of *This Is More Than I Can Stand - A Biography of Charlie Hall*, his very first film was titled *Mother's Joy* where Charlie played a house guest. This comedy starred an up and coming performer named Stan Laurel. Another funnyman named James Finlayson was also in the cast. Charlie would go on to appear in more Stan Laurel comedies at the Hal Roach Studios plus others with Charley Chase, Will Rogers and Glenn Tryon. During this time, Charlie was also working as a carpenter on the lot where he would only make five dollars a day, sometimes \$2.50 a day. This was during the depression.

Charlie Hall's first Laurel & Hardy film was *Love 'Em And Weep* where he played the butler in 1927. That same year, he had the honor of throwing the first pie in what turned out to be one of the most memorable pie fights in film history, Laurel & Hardy's *The Battle Of The Century*, where the entire day's output from the Los Angeles Pie Company was used.

Also in 1927, Charlie Hall had a great part in Buster Keaton's classic feature, *College*.

During the transition to sound films, Charlie appeared in Laurel & Hardy's *Berth Marks* in 1929. Although this was a talking film, Charlie had no dialogue in this comedy.

His first leading role with Laurel & Hardy was in 1931's *Laughing Gravy* where he played a dog hating landlord. He would go on to make a total of 47 appearances (plus foreign language versions) in Laurel & Hardy comedies until 1940. This was the most number of appearances by anyone working with Stan and Ollie.

While he was at the Hal Roach Studios, Charlie became very good friends with cameraman George Stevens, who would go on to become an Academy Award winning director of films such as *Gunga Din*, *A Place in the Sun*, *Shane*, *Giant* and *The Diary Of Anne Frank*.

In 1937, Charlie went back home to Birmingham. It was there, he met up with another friend from the Hal Roach Studios, Edgar Kennedy, who was making a film there. He got Charlie a part in this picture titled *Hey Hey USA*. Here he was now, of British origin playing an American gangster.

By 1939, Charlie Hall was back in the United States working at different studios with stars like Ginger Rogers, Lucille Ball, Jack Benny and Charles Laughton. He was also making his final appearances with Laurel & Hardy.

He would continue in various roles in motion pictures through 1950. When he wasn't in front of the camera, Charlie was behind the scenes working as a skilled carpenter.

During the 1950's, Charlie Hall turned to television and can be seen in programs such as *My Little Margie* (Episode titled *Freddie's Formula* - 1953), *The Abbott & Costello Show* (Episode titled *Fall Guy* - 1954), *Topper* (Episode titled *Masquerade* - 1954), *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (Episode titled *Safe Conduct* - 1956), *Cheyenne* (Episode titled *Quicksand* - 1956).

During the mid 1950's, his health was declining due to his many years of excessive drinking. Quite a few of those early drinking days were with Stan Laurel. Finding work in his final years was very difficult for Charlie, even with help of his good friend George Stevens.

On June 16, 1958, Charlie was on the radio version of *You Bet Your Life* with Groucho Marx. Three days later he was on the television version of the same program.

Charlie Hall died in his home in North Hollywood on December 7, 1959 at the age of 60. His wife, Wilda, of 24 years was with him at that time. He is buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery in Glendale, California.

When the Sons Of The Desert, the International Laurel & Hardy Appreciation Society gather for local meetings and conventions, the members raise their glasses to toast five special people who were very import to the comedies of Laurel & Hardy. The five people are Stan Laurel, Oliver "Babe" Hardy, James Finlayson, Mae Busch and Charlie Hall.

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**They Go Boom** - Filmed June 26, 1929. Resumed July 1, 1929. Resumed again on July 5 through 11, 1929. Released September 21, 1929.

This was the fifth Laurel & Hardy short comedy with sound dialogue.

The gaps in the filming dates were due to a personal appearance by Laurel & Hardy in San Francisco, plus an injury to Stan along with the 4th of July holiday.

Working titles: *coughing up*. Later, *The Sniffles*

Both Stan and Ollie did not like working in flannel nightshirts all day. Stan once said to a reporter, "After working all day in a night-shirt, I feel like going home, getting dressed up and going to bed".

**Charlie Hall** - had appeared as the angry landlord in Laurel & Hardy's *Leave 'Em Laughing* the year before in 1928.

According to the movie's press sheet, "The Hal Roach Studio cafeteria, opening into the public highway, is daily crowded with tourists and townspeople who come to enjoy the comic sight of Laurel and Hardy, Our Gang, Charley Chase and Harry Langdon in the serious act of stowing away calories. The onlookers were somewhat startled last week to observe Mr. Stan Laurel and Mr. Oliver Hardy enter the cafe clad in flannel nightshirts and woolen socks. Utterly unaware of the gasps of astonishment that went up from the tourists, the two comedians took their trays and fell into line before the steam table."

The exploding air mattress at the end of the film was created by a prop man, a carpenter and film cutter who were very handy with a rifle. Due to fire regulations, an explosion was not allowed on the set. George Stevens was the cameraman while Stan, Ollie and director James Parrott stood far out of camera range while the three marksmen shot the inflated mattress.

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**Them Thar Hills** - Filmed June 1 through June 20, 1934. Released July 21, 1934.

During the filming of this comedy, Stan Laurel celebrated his 44th birthday on June 16th and Mae Busch celebrated her 43rd birthday on June 18th.

This comedy was planned to be filmed in the Santa Ynez Canyon, about 15 miles away from the Hal Roach Studios. The overcast weather and fog during the month of June put an end to this plan. The crew came back to the studio and the entire exterior set was built on a sound stage.

Liquor is the dominant factor in this film. Although Prohibition had ended six months before filming began on this comedy, moonshiners were still in business, but they were avoiding their payments of the federal excise tax on liquor. Thus, making their operation illegal.

The first scene where Stan returns with a bucket of water from the well, the music cue is the same one used in *The Devil's Brother* when Laurel & Hardy made their entrance.

**Charlie Hall** - After making 35 uncredited screen appearances with Laurel & Hardy, Charlie finally got an opening credit in this film. Unfortunately for him, his name was spelled wrong. In his many previous roles, supporting players were not given credit as a rule.

**Mae Busch** - like Charlie Hall, Mae's first appearance in a Laurel & Hardy film was in *Love 'Em And Weep*.

**Billy Gilbert** - had appeared in 53 Hal Roach comedies (11 with Laurel & Hardy) from 1931 through 1934. His contract was terminated in March of 1934. However, he did come back for a one picture deal in June of 1934. Billy would make one more appearance with Laurel & Hardy in their 1938 feature *Block-Heads*.

**Bobby Dunn** - Has only one line in this film. While doing a stunt, he lost one of his eyes when he fell into a barrel of water and a floating matchstick caught it. He wore a glass eye which gave him a cross-eyed appearance for the rest of his life.

The song Ollie is humming while preparing the meal is titled *The Old Spinning Wheel*. It was written by Billy Hill in 1930 and popularized by Ray Noble and His Orchestra. Paul Whiteman, Patti Paige and Slim Whitman recorded this tune. Michael Learned and Ralph Waite sang this song in *The Conflict* which was a television episode of *The Waltons* in 1974.

Despite everything that went wrong for Laurel & Hardy in this film, Stan Laurel bought a deluxe trailer complete with hot and cold running water along with an electric generator for refrigeration. He and his then wife, Ruth, drove it to Lake Arrowhead, Big Bear and Palm Springs.

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**Tit For Tat** - Filmed December 10 through 20, 1934. Released January 5, 1935.

This was the only time Laurel & Hardy made a sequel to one of their earlier comedies. Charlie Hall and Mae Busch return for another bout with Stan and Ollie.

Basically, all of the ideas written in the original script were discarded and new gags were created and ad-libbed on the set.

In January of 1936, *Tit For Tat* received an Academy Award nomination for Best Short Subject. However, it lost out to Robert Benchley's *How To Sleep*.

A man and woman exit Hall's Groceries. The man is Baldwin Cooke.

Notice that Oliver Hardy appears to be a bit slimmer in this comedy. According to his niece Margaret, in 1934 Oliver went through several phases of losing and gaining weight.

**Bobby Dunn** - has his best moment in a Laurel & Hardy comedy. He has only one line repeated several times, but still he makes the most of it.

Stan's comment that "He who filters my good name steals trash" is a garbled reference to Othello Act III, scene iii: "Who steals my purse steals trash".

The alum used in this film is a forgotten substance today. Back then, alum (which was hydrated potassium sulfate) was used in baking powder and in pickling to keep vegetables crisp. It was

also the main ingredient in a styptic pencil that caused the shrinking of tissue which explains why Laurel & Hardy lips were pursed after eating the marshmallows.

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## **REFERENCES**

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