

Person To Person - This Is Your Life Notes

Edward R. Murrow - was born Egbert Roscoe Murrow in North Carolina. He joined CBS as director of talks and education in 1935 and remained with the network for his entire career. He first gained prominence during World War II with a series of live radio broadcasts from Europe for the news division of CBS.

On November 18, 1951, Murrow's radio program *Hear It Now* moved to television and was renamed *See It Now*. This program was best remembered as the show that publicly confronted Senator Joseph McCarthy, criticized McCarthyism and the Red Scare. On October 2, 1953, Murrow launched a second weekly television program, a series of celebrity interviews entitled *Person To Person*. His very first guest on this program was Brooklyn Dodgers catcher, Roy Campanella. On this program, he was always seen with his trademark Camel cigarettes in which he smoked over three packs a day. Murrow served as host of this show from 1953 to 1959 in 211 episodes.

Duke Ellington - Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington was born on April 29, 1899 in Washington, D.C.

At age seven, Ellington began taking piano lessons. Edward's mother surrounded her son with dignified women to reinforce his manners and teach him elegance. His childhood friends noticed that his casual, offhand manner and dapper dress gave him the bearing of a young nobleman, so they began calling him "Duke". Ellington credited his friend Edgar McEntee for the nickname: "I think he felt that in order for me to be eligible for his constant companionship, I should have a title. So, he called me Duke."

Although he took piano lessons, Ellington was more interested in baseball. His first job was selling peanuts at Washington Senators baseball games.

In late 1917, he formed his first group, "The Duke's Serenaders". Ellington then made eight records in 1924, receiving composing credit on three including "Choo Choo". Duke Ellington and his current Kentucky Club Orchestra grew to a group of ten players.

In 1929, the Cotton Club Orchestra appeared on stage for several months in Florenz Ziegfeld's Show Girl. Will Vodery, Ziegfeld's musical supervisor, recommended Ellington for the show. By 1932 his orchestra consisted of six brass instruments, four reeds and a rhythm section of four players. As the leader, Ellington was not a strict disciplinarian. He maintained control of his orchestra with a combination of charm, humor, flattery and astute psychology.

From 1936, Ellington began to make recordings with smaller groups (sextets, octets, and nonets) drawn from his then 15 man orchestra. By 1955, after three years of recording for Capitol Records, Ellington lacked a regular recording affiliation. His appearance at the Newport Jazz Festival on July 7, 1956, returned him to wider prominence.

Around this time Ellington and Billy Strayhorn began to work on film scoring. The first of these was *Anatomy Of A Murder* in 1959. This was followed by *Paris Blues* in 1961, which featured Paul Newman and Sidney Poitier as jazz musicians. For this work, Ellington was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Score.

Ellington performed what is considered his final full concert in a ballroom at Northern Illinois University on March 20, 1974. Since 1980, that ballroom has been dedicated as the "Duke Ellington Ballroom". In 1960, he was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame for his contributions to recording industry.

Tallulah Bankhead - Tallulah Brockman Bankhead was born on January 31, 1902 in Huntsville, Alabama. Tallulah and her sister Eugenia were mostly reared by their paternal grandmother.

After watching a performance at a circus, she taught herself how to cartwheel and frequently cartwheeled about the house, sang and recited literature that she had memorized. Her husky voice was the result of chronic bronchitis due to childhood illness.

At 15, Bankhead submitted her photo to Picture Play, which was conducting a contest and awarding a trip to New York plus a movie part to 12 winners based on their photographs. However, she forgot to send in her name or address with the picture.

Bankhead learned that she was one of the winners while browsing the magazine at her local drugstore. Her photo in the magazine was captioned "Who is She?", urging the mystery girl to contact the paper at once. Congressman William Bankhead sent in a letter to the magazine with her duplicate photo. In 1919, after roles in three silent films, Bankhead made her stage debut in *The Squab Farm* at the Bijou Theatre in New York. She soon realized her place was on stage rather than screen.

Although Bankhead was not very interested in making films, the opportunity to make \$50,000 per film was too good to pass up. Her 1932 movie *Devil And The Deep* is notable for the presence of three major co-stars, with Bankhead receiving top billing over Gary Cooper, Charles Laughton and Cary Grant. Later in 1932, she starred opposite Robert Montgomery in *Faithless*.

From 1936 to 1938, David O. Selznick, producer of *Gone With The Wind* called Bankhead the "first choice among established stars" to play Scarlett O'Hara in the upcoming film. Although her 1938 screen test for the role in black-and-white was superb, she photographed poorly in Technicolor. Selznick also reportedly believed that at age 36, she was too old to play Scarlett.

In 1944, Alfred Hitchcock cast her as cynical journalist Constance Porter in her most successful film, *Lifeboat*. Her performance was acknowledged as her best on film and won her the New York Film Critics Circle award. Bankhead wrote a bestselling autobiography *Tallulah: My Autobiography* that was published in 1952.

Although a heavy smoker, heavy drinker and consumer of sleeping pills, Bankhead continued to perform in the 1950's and 1960's on Broadway, radio, television and in the occasional film. Even as her body got more and more frail from the mid 1950's, she continued to perform up until her death in 1968.

Bankhead's most popular and best remembered television appearance was the December 3, 1957 on *The Lucy-Desi Comedy Hour*. Bankhead played herself in the classic episode titled "The Celebrity Next Door". The part was originally slated for Bette Davis, but Davis had to bow out after cracking a vertebra. Lucille Ball was reportedly a fan of Bankhead and did a good impression of her.

Bill Cullen - was born William Lawrence Francis Cullen on February 18, 1920. Over the course of his career, he hosted 23 shows and earned the nickname "Dean of Game Show Hosts".

Cullen contracted polio in August 1921, when he was 18 months old. The long-term aftereffect of that illness, combined with injuries sustained in a serious motor vehicle accident in 1937 requiring a nine-month hospitalization, made it difficult for him to walk or stand for an extended period of time.

Cullen was a pre-med student at the University of Pittsburgh, but had to withdraw because of financial problems. After he achieved some success in radio, he returned to the university and earned a bachelor's degree.

Cullen's broadcasting career began in 1939 in Pittsburgh at WWSW radio. In 1943, Cullen left WWSW to briefly work at rival station KDKA before leaving Pittsburgh a year later to try his luck in New York. A week after arriving in New York, he was hired as a staff announcer at CBS.

His first venture into game shows was in 1945, when he was hired as announcer for a radio quiz called *Give And Take*. Cullen's first television game show was the television version of *Winner Take All*, which premiered on NBC in 1952. From 1954 to 1955, he hosted NBC's *Place The Face*, while he simultaneously hosted CBS's *Name That Tune*.

From 1956 to 1965, he hosted the initial daytime and primetime versions of *The Price Is Right*. Other game shows Cullen hosted included *Eye Guess* in the 1960's were *Three on a Match*, *Blankety Blanks* and *The Love Experts*. *The Joker's Wild* was his final hosting job from 1984 to 1986.

Throughout his entire career in radio and television, Cullen hosted more than 25,000 individual episodes of radio and television shows.

Among the numerous shows that Cullen appeared on as a celebrity guest were *I've Got A Secret*, *What's My Line?*, *To Tell The Truth*, *Personality*, *The Cross-Wits*, *Password and Password Plus*.

Ralph Edwards - After some part-time announcing jobs, he got his big break in 1938 with a full-time job for the Columbia Broadcasting System on the original WABC (now WCBS), where he worked with two other young announcers who would become broadcasting legends - Mel Allen and Andre Baruch.

After years of experimental broadcasts, the Federal Communications Commission approved commercial television broadcasts starting on July 1, 1941 and NBC's New York station WNBT (now WNBC) was the first to make the changeover, with Edwards hosting a one-time episode of *Truth or Consequences* over WNBT to commemorate the first day of commercial telecasting. The show was originally based in New York, with Mel Allen as announcer, but later moved to Los Angeles.

In 1948 Edwards created, produced and hosted *This Is Your Life* on NBC Radio, moving to NBC-TV in 1952–1961. Edwards also produced dozens of game shows, including *About Faces*, *Knockout*, *Place The Face*, *It Could Be You*, *Name That Tune* and *The Cross-Wits*.

Edwards furthered the career of another game show host, his protégé Bob Barker. When *Truth or Consequences* returned for another NBC run in late 1956, Edwards hired Barker on December 21 after hearing his radio show on his car radio. During the 2001 Daytime Emmy Awards, Barker told backstage reporters that his lifelong friend Edwards told him to be no one else but himself.

For his contribution to the radio and television industries, Ralph Edwards has two stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame located at 6116 Hollywood Boulevard (radio) and 6262 Hollywood Boulevard (television). Both were dedicated February 8, 1960.

Edwards was inducted into the National Radio Hall of Fame in 1995.

Donna Reed - was born Donna Belle Mullenger in 1921, the eldest of five children. In 1936, while she was a sophomore at Denison High School, her chemistry teacher gave her the book *How To Win Friends and Influence People*. The book is said to have greatly influenced her life.

Reed planned to become a teacher but was unable to pay for college. She moved to California to attend Los Angeles City College. While there, she performed in various stage productions, although she had no plans to become an actress. After receiving several offers to screen test for studios, she eventually signed with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. However, she did insist on finishing her education first. She completed her associate degree, then signed with an agent.

In 1941, Reed made her film debut in *The Get-Away* opposite Robert Sterling. She was billed as Donna Adams. MGM soon

changed her name to Donna Reed. She is quoted as saying, "A studio publicist hung the name on me and I never did like it". I hear 'Donna Reed' and I think of a tall, chic, austere blonde that isn't me. 'Donna Reed' – it has a cold, forbidding sound".

MGM lent her to RKO Pictures for the role of Mary Bailey in Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life*. The film has since been named as one of the 100 best American films ever made by the American Film Institute and is regularly aired on television during the Christmas season.

Reed played the role of Alma "Lorene" Burke, girlfriend of Montgomery Clift's character, in the World War II drama *From Here To Eternity*. The role earned her an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for 1953.

From 1958 to 1966, Reed starred in *The Donna Reed Show*, a television series produced by her then-husband, Tony Owen. The show ran for eight seasons on ABC. Reed won a Golden Globe Award and earned four Emmy Award nominations for her work on the series.

In the 1984–1985 season of the television series *Dallas*, Reed replaced Barbara Bel Geddes as Miss Ellie Ewing. When Bel Geddes agreed to return to the role for the 1985–1986 season, Reed was abruptly fired. Reed failed in her attempts to keep the 1985–1986 season from beginning production while she tried to get reinstated in the role of Miss Ellie. Superior Court Judge John L. Cole denied Reed's request to issue a preliminary injunction, which could have halted production. Reed signed a three year contract in October of 1984 to play the part, but Lorimar informed her that the company had decided to reinstate Barbara Bel Geddes in the role for the 1985 season. She had sued for breach

of contract for \$7.5 million, but later settled out of court for over \$1 million.

REFERENCES

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