

## The Dick Van Dyke Show Notes

### Episodes for class:

My Mother Can Beat Up My Father aired September 23, 1964

Talk To The Snail aired March 23, 1966

*The Dick Van Dyke Show* was created by **Carl Reiner** and aired on CBS from October 3, 1961 to June 1, 1966 with a total of 158 episodes during those five seasons.

After his work with Sid Caesar ended in 1958, Carl Reiner's agent, Harry Kalcheim suggested that Reiner look into situation comedies as his next television venture. After looking over several proposed comedy scripts and being disappointed with all of them, it was Reiner's wife Estelle who said "I'll bet **you** could write a better script than any one of those yourself!"

*The Dick Van Dyke Show* was preceded by a 1960 pilot for a series to be called *Head Of The Family* with Carl Reiner, who created the show based on his own experiences as a television writer, played Robbie (pronounced Pee-Tree) Petrie. Unable to hire **Joanna Moore** or **Jennifer Lea**, Laura Petrie was eventually played by **Barbara Britton**, who played the role of Pamela North opposite Richard Denning in the television series *Mr. and Mrs. North*. Ritchie was a played by **Gary Morgan**, Buddy Sorrell by Morty Gunty, Sally Rogers by Sylvia Miles, Ritchie by Gary Morgan and Alan Sturdy (the Alan Brady character) was played by Jack Wakefield, although his face was never fully seen.

The pilot episode was filmed in New York at the **Gold Medal Studios** at 807 East 175th St & Marion Avenue. This was the former home of Biograph Studios where D. W. Griffith had great success.

The pilot was unsuccessful, which led Reiner to rework the show with Dick Van Dyke playing by Rob, not "Robbie" and pronounced his last name PET-tree rather than the pilot's PEE-tree.

**Jerry and Millie Helper** were based on Carl and Estelle Reiner's real life best friends and New Rochelle neighbors **Jerry and Millie Schoenbaum**. **Buddy Sorrell's** character was modeled after Mel Brooks and **Sally Rogers** character was based on comedy writer Selma Diamond and Lucille Kallen who was best known for being the only woman in the most famous TV writers' room, the one that created Sid Caesar's *Your Show Of Shows* from 1950 to 1954.

Many of the show's plots were inspired by Reiner's experiences as a writer for *Your Show Of Shows* and *Caesar's Hour*, both of which starred Sid Caesar. Reiner based the character of Rob Petrie on himself but, according to Reiner, Rob's boss Alan Brady is not based on Caesar, but is a combination of the abrasive Milton Berle and Jackie Gleason. Johnny Carson was a finalist for the role of Rob Petrie, but Sheldon Leonard selected Van Dyke based on his Broadway performance in *Bye Bye Birdie*.

Rob and Laura Petrie lived at **148 Bonnie Meadow Road** in New Rochelle, New York. In reality, Carl Reiner and his family lived at **48 Bonnie Meadow Road**.

*The Dick Van Dyke Show* was filmed before a live audience at the Desilu-Cahuenga Studios in Hollywood, California. *The Andy Griffith Show* filmed on Stages 1 and 2, *The Dick Van Dyke Show* was filmed on Stage 8 and *I Love Lucy* was filmed on Stage 9.

The show's theme song was created by **Earle Hagen**. In a 2004 TVLand Awards appearance, Van Dyke revealed Morey Amsterdam had written lyrics for the show's theme song.

**Carl Reiner** - was born in The Bronx, New York. When Reiner was 16, he was working as a machinist repairing sewing machines. His older brother, Charles read about a free drama workshop sponsored by the Works Progress Administration and told Carl about it. He credited his brother with the decision to change careers.

Early in his career, Reiner performed in several Broadway musicals and had the lead role in *Call Me Mister*. In 1950, he was cast by Max Leibman as a comic actor on Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows*, appearing in skits and contributing ideas to writers Mel Brooks and Neil Simon.

By 1960, Reiner had teamed up with Mel Brooks as a comedy duo on *The Steve Allen Show* which included Reiner playing the straight man to Brooks in *The 2000 Year Old Man*. In the 1970's and beyond, he worked as a director on films and television programs such as *Where's Poppa?*, *Oh, God!*, *The Jerk*, *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*, *The Man With Two Brains* and *All of Me*.

Reiner was honored in 2000, with the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor at the Kennedy Center. In 1960, he received a star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame, located at 6421 Hollywood Boulevard. He was inducted into Television Hall of Fame in 1999.

**Dick Van Dyke** - was born Richard Wayne Van Dyke in West Plains, Missouri. His younger brother was entertainer Jerry Van Dyke. His comic inspiration was Stan Laurel and was able to find him in the Santa Monica, California phone book where Laurel lived. He called and Laurel invited him over. They became very good friends. When Laurel passed away in 1965, Van Dyke delivered his eulogy at the funeral.

Before his show business career began, he did everything from working in an advertising agency to becoming a disc jockey. Early on, Van Dyke hosted game shows such as *Mother's Day* and *Laugh Line*. He turned down *The Price Is Right*.

Formed a nightclub stand-up comedy act in the late 1940's with Phil Erickson, his friend from Danville. They toured the country as the slapstick, lip-syncing "Merry Mutes". The act ended in 1954 when Van Dyke went out on his own and got work in New Orleans local television.

Van Dyke won a Tony Award for his efforts in the musical *Bye-Bye Birdie*. He also starred in the movie by the same name. In films he is remembered for entertaining performances in *Mary Poppins*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *Fitzwilly*. During the years 1993 to 2001, Van Dyke starred with his son, Barry Van Dyke in the popular television series *Diagnosis Murder*.

Rob Petrie was ranked #22 in TV Guide's list of the "50 Greatest TV Dads of All Time". He was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame located at 7021 Hollywood Boulevard.

**Mary Tyler Moore** - was born in Flatbush, Brooklyn, New York. Moore's first break in show business was in 1955, as a dancing Happy Hotpoint, the Hotpoint Appliance elf, in commercials broadcast during *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*.

After several guest roles on television series, she had a recurring role as Sam, Richard Diamond's answering service girl, on *Richard Diamond, Private Detective*. Her face was never shown, only her legs.

After *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and before *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, she appeared in the feature films *Thoroughly Modern Millie* with Julie Andrews and *Change of Habit* with Elvis Presley. During her career, she was nominated for an Academy Award for her performance in *Ordinary People*, won seven Emmy Awards, two Tony Awards, one Golden Globe Award and numerous others. She was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1992 for her work in and is television located at 7021 Hollywood Boulevard.

A bronze statue capturing her character Mary Richards signature hat-toss went on display May 8, 2002 at the Minneapolis intersection where the scene for *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* was originally filmed. On hand for the ceremony, Moore tossed her hat into a appreciative crowd.

**Rose Marie** - born Rose Marie Mazzetta in Manhattan, New York. Her mother would take her to see local vaudeville shows often. Afterwards, she would sing what she had heard for neighbors. At the age of three, Marie started performing under the name "Baby Rose Marie". By the time she was five, Marie was offered a seven-year contract and became a radio star on the NBC Radio Network along with making a series of films.

According to Rose Marie: "I had a deep voice, not like Shirley Temple, but more like Sophie Tucker. I never sounded like a child so there were some people who thought I was really a 30-year-old midget."

From 1929 to 1934, Rose Marie had her own radio show, made numerous records and was featured in a number of Paramount motion pictures and short films such as *International House* with W. C. Fields.

After *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, she co-starred in two seasons of *The Doris Day Show*. She also appeared in two episodes of *The Monkees*. Later, Marie had a semi-regular seat in the upper center square on the original version of *The Hollywood Squares*.

In the mid-1970s, Rose Marie appeared in the recurring role of Hilda on the police drama *S.W.A.T.* In the early 1990's, Rose Marie had a recurring role as Frank Fontana's mother on *Murphy Brown*.

Rose Marie was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for Television located at 7083 Hollywood Boulevard on October 3, 2001. When she was 80 years old, Marie was asked if she planned to retire: "I've been in show business my whole life. Why start something new now?"

**Morey Amsterdam** - was born Moritz Amsterdam in Chicago, Illinois. He began working in vaudeville in 1922 as the straight man for his older brother. He also played the cello which was a skill he used throughout his career. By 1924, he was working in a speakeasy operated by Al Capone. After being caught in the middle of a gunfight, Amsterdam moved to California and worked as a joke writer.

On radio in the late 1940's, Amsterdam had a program on CBS. In 1950, he briefly hosted the comedy-variety show *Broadway Open House*, which was television's first late-night entertainment show on NBC.

Amsterdam will always be best remembered for the insults he delivered to Alan Brady's brother-in-law, Mel Cooley on *The Dick Van Dyke Show*:

Mel Cooley: Good morning.

Buddy Sorrell: It was till YOU got here.

Mel Cooley: Rob, I don't like coming here and having insults thrown at me.

Buddy Sorrell: Stay home; I'll phone 'em over to you.

After his days on *The Dick van Dyke Show*, Amsterdam played Cappy, owner of the local nightclub, in the *Beach Party* movies during the 1960's. In 1990, he appeared on five episodes of the daytime soap opera *The Young and The Restless*.

In 1960, Morey Amsterdam was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for Radio at 6850 Hollywood Blvd.

**Richard Deacon** - was born Richard Lewis Deacon in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He attended Ithaca College, first as a medical student, but later developed an interest in acting. At the beginning of his career, Helen Hayes told him that he would never become a leading man, but encouraged him to become a character actor. As a result, Deacon was typecast as a humorless or foul-tempered authority figure.

In addition to his success on *The Dick van Dyke Show*, Deacon was featured on *Leave It to Beaver*, playing Lumpy Rutherford's father, Fred.

After *The Dick van Dyke Show*, Deacon co-starred on the sitcom *The Mothers-in-Law* with Kaye Ballard and Eve Arden.

Deacon was also a gourmet chef. In the 1980's he hosted a Canadian television program on microwave cookery. He wrote a companion book on the subject as well.

**Ken Berry** (Tony Daniels) - is best remembered as Captain Wilton Parmenter on *F Troop*, Sam Jones on *Mayberry R.F.D.* and Vinton Harper on *Mama's Family*.

While in the Army, Berry was with Special Services, under Sergeant Leonard Nimoy, who encouraged him to go to Hollywood and pursue acting.

In 1956, Berry performed in Las Vegas where he opened for and joined Abbott and Costello in their stage act, performing sketches along with song and dance routines at the Sahara Hotel and Casino.

In 1957, Berry was the winner on Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts and was asked back to perform for six more weeks.

In 1973, after his *F Troop* and *Mayberry R.F.D.* days, Berry was to be featured on a Sherwood Schwartz spin-off of *The Brady Bunch*, titled *Kelly's Kids*, as the adoptive father of three boys. The pilot was of no interest to ABC.

Over the following years, Berry guest starred on shows such as *The Bob Newhart Show*, *The Julie Andrews Hour*, *The Sonny & Cher Comedy Hour*, *The Donny & Marie Show*, *The Love Boat*, *Fantasy Island*, *Grizzly Adams*, *CHiPs*, *The Golden Girls* and *Little House On The Prairie*.

**Paul Gilbert** (Mr. Cavendish) - He was born Ed MacMahon (yes, that is his birth name) in New York City. Gilbert's family were vaudeville performers where he began his career as an aerialist.

During the 1950's, Gilbert appeared on several variety shows including *The Spike Jones Show*, *The NBC Comedy Hour*, *The Colgate Comedy Hour* and the anthology series, *Lux Video Theatre*.



In the 1960's, Gilbert was seen on several network television series including *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *The Hollywood Palace*, *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.*, *Good Morning World* and *The Dean Martin Show* and *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In*.

In May of 1964, Gilbert and his wife, Barbara Crane adopted one-day-old Melissa Gilbert, a future co-star in the popular television series, *Little House On The Prairie*. The couple also adopted Jonathan Gilbert, who would go on to play Willie Oleson on the same series.

**Henry Gibson** (Doug Bedlork) - was born James Bateman in Germantown, Philadelphia. He adopted the stage name of Henry Gibson, after Norwegian poet Henrik Ibsen because "...if you say his name with a Southern accent, it sounds like Henry Gibson".

Some of his early credits in television and motion pictures include *Tonight Starring Jack Paar*, *The Nutty Professor*, *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *My Favorite Martian*. Gibson spent three years as part of *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* television show's cast, where often played "The Poet".

Some of Gibson's later appearances were in *The New Adventures Of Wonder Woman*, *The Dukes of Hazzard*, *The Blues Brothers*, *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* and *The Love Boat*. His final major roles were in *Wedding Crashers* and *Boston Legal* as recurring character Judge Clark Brown.

**Paul Winchell** (Claude Wilbur) - was born Paul Wilchinsky in New York City. When he was a young boy, Winchell found a magazine advertisement offering a ventriloquism kit for ten cents. Back at school, he asked his art teacher, Jero Magon, if he could receive class credit for creating a ventriloquist's dummy. Magon

agreed and Winchell thanked him by naming his creation Jerry Mahoney.

In 1938, Winchell appeared on the Major Bowes Amateur Hour and won first prize. His first show as a ventriloquist was on radio with Jerry Mahoney in 1943. During the 1950's, Winchell hosted The Paul Winchell and Jerry Mahoney Show for children.

He made guest appearances on television series such as *Perry Mason*, *McMillan & Wife*, *The Brady Bunch*, *The Donna Reed Show* and appearances as Homer Winch on *The Beverly Hillbillies*. In animation, Winchell was the original voice of Tigger, Dick Dastardly, Gargamel, Scrubbing Bubbles along with other characters.

Another side of Paul Winchell was as a pre-med student at Columbia University. He graduated from The Acupuncture Research College of Los Angeles in 1974 and became an acupuncturist. He also worked as a medical hypnotist at the Gibbs Institute in Hollywood.

He owned more than 30 patents in his lifetime. He invented an artificial heart with the assistance of Dr. Henry Heimlich, inventor of the Heimlich maneuver and held an early U.S. patent for such a device. Winchell established more medical patents while working on projects for the Leukemia Society and the American Red Cross.

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## REFERENCES

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The Official Dick Van Dyke Show Book by Vince Waldron