



The Women Who Made Television Funny: Ten Stars of 1950s Sitcoms

David C. Tucker

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Most of the bright and talented actresses who made America laugh in the 1950s are off the air today, but their pioneering Hollywood careers irrevocably changed the face of television comedy. These smart and sassy women successfully negotiated the hazards of the male-dominated workplace with class and humor, and the work they did in the 1950s is inventive still by today's standards. Unable to fall back on strong language, shock value, or racial and sexual epithets, the female sitcom stars of the 1950s entertained with pure talent and screen savvy. As they did so, they helped to lay the foundation for the development of television comedy. This book pays tribute to 10 prominent television actresses who played lead roles in popular comedy shows of the 1950s. Each chapter covers the works and personalities of one actress: Lucille Ball (*I Love Lucy*), Gracie Allen (*The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*), Eve Arden (*Our Miss Brooks*), Spring Byington (*December Bride*), Joan Davis (*I Married Joan*), Anne Jeffreys (*Topper*), Donna Reed (*The Donna Reed Show*), Ann Sothern (*Private Secretary* and *The Ann Sothern Show*), Gale Storm (*My Little Margie* and *The Gale Storm Show: Oh! Susanna*), and Betty White (*Life with Elizabeth*). For each star, a career sketch is provided, concentrating primarily on her television work but also noting achievements in other areas. Appendices offer cast and crew lists, a chronology, and an additional biographical sketch of 10 less familiar actresses who deserve recognition.

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