

Thanks,
Johnny.
1925 - 2005

Johnny Carson

October 23, 1925 - January 23, 2005

John William Carson, the veteran comedian and talk show host who ruled late night TV for 30 years, died on Jan. 23 of emphysema. He was 79.

Born in Corning, Iowa, and raised in Norfolk, Neb., Carson was an above-average student who made his mark as the class clown. He performed magic tricks for local Rotary groups, impersonated Jack Benny for classmates and wrote a humor column for his high school newspaper. Shortly after graduation, Carson enlisted in the Navy and served as an ensign aboard the U.S.S. Pennsylvania during World War II.

Upon his return to the states, Carson attended the University of Nebraska. He performed in the school's theatrical productions and worked part-time for the KFAB radio station in Lincoln, Neb. Carson earned a bachelor's degree in only three years, then took a job conducting interviews at WOW-590 AM in Omaha.

In 1951, he moved to Los Angeles and broke into television as an announcer for KNXT, the local CBS affiliate. Carson persuaded the station to give him a 15-minute, Sunday afternoon comedy show "Carson's Cellar", which led to a writing stint with "The Red Skelton Show." When Skelton injured himself two hours before show time, CBS allowed Carson to fill in. The comedian was so popular that the network eventually gave him his own program. "The Johnny Carson Show" went through several writers and directors, but couldn't

capitalize on his talents and was soon canceled.

Carson moved to New York in the mid-1950s and made guest appearances on various television programs, including "The Tonight Show" with Jack Paar. He hosted the ABC game show "Who Do You Trust?," which featured Ed McMahon as its announcer, until 1962. That same year, he took over for Paar in the late night timeslot. For three decades, Carson appeared on millions of television sets following McMahon's classic intro "Heeeeere's Johnny!" The dapper host also became a household name and one of the highest-paid performers in television history.

With a polite demeanor, Carson skewered presidents and other politicians in his fast-paced opening monologue. With impeccable comedic timing, he starred in a variety of skits and often played second fiddle to a monkey wildcat or marmoset. With charm and wit, he interviewed more than 22,000 guests and introduced America to entertainers such as Bill Cosby, Barbra Streisand, David Letterman, Joan Rivers, Woody Allen, Jerry Seinfeld, Billy Crystal, Roseanne Barr, George Carlin, Garry Shandling, Steve Martin and his successor, Jay Leno.

Carson's biggest audience tuned in on Dec. 17, 1969, to watch ukulele player Tiny Tim marry his 17-year-old bride, Miss Vicki. Although the couple later divorced, an estimated 58 million viewers watched their nuptials on "The Tonight Show." Married four times himself, Carson frequently mocked his past relationships and expensive alimony payments.

America's late night king of comedy hosted the Academy Awards five times and occasionally headlined at top hotels in Las Vegas and Atlantic City, N.J. He won six Emmy Awards, the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences' Governors'

Award and a George Foster Peabody Award. Carson was inducted into the

Television Hall of Fame in 1987, and received a Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honor, in 1992. His star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame is located at 1751 Vine Street.

Carson retired in 1992 and kept a low profile during the final years of his life. In his last show, he told the audience:

"I'm one of the lucky people in the world. I found something I always wanted to do and have enjoyed every minute of it."

For 30 years, no matter what was going on in the world, Johnny Carson could make us laugh at the end of the day. Even years after his retirement, he remained the unachievable standard for late-night entertainment. We will all miss his humor, class and charm.

Tribute Wall

TA

“ I have no doubt that Heaven is a funnier place now you are there. Thank you for your humour, thank you for your grace and humility. God Bless.

TANK - June 10, 2006 at 12:00 AM

KM

“ I remember many heartfelt laughs from my parents when I was growing up.....and they were watching you and your great talent. I grew up, had a child of my own, and we watched you till you went off air. You are still a wonderful memory, thank you!

Karen L. Geiger, MD - May 17, 2006 at 12:00 AM

AP

“ Please accept our deepest sympathy.

Alfred Poone - February 25, 2005 at 12:00 AM

ME

“ My heart and prayers go out to your family and may God bless everyone you know.

Megan - February 25, 2005 at 12:00 AM

JK

“ Thanks for the Laughs!

John Kachtosen - February 24, 2005 at 12:00 AM

JM

“ 30 years of great memories and laughs. Here's to you Johnny!!

Jack Mahoffer - February 24, 2005 at 12:00 AM

DD

“ *Johnny Carson*

Donna DeMeo - February 18, 2005 at 12:00 AM

JH

“ *I spent 30 years watching Johnny, and he never failed to delight me. I will miss this masterful comedian and interviewer.*

James R. Horacek - February 07, 2005 at 12:00 AM

ET

“ *To Alexis and family I offer my deepest condolences and Pray that God will comfort You in your time of loss. Johnny, You were without a doubt the leader and greatest of all late night TV Show hosts'. You brought a lot of laughter and smiles to your v*

Ed Tinnin - February 07, 2005 at 12:00 AM

TJ

“ *As we keep the family in our prayers, may God bless and watch over the family. Johnny was such a great person and such a comedian. He will be greatly missed.*

Thora Jendrzey - January 31, 2005 at 12:00 AM

TD

“ *Here's Johnny*

Tim Duncan - January 31, 2005 at 12:00 AM

FE

“ I am going to miss Johnny's humor and wit and my sympathy goes out to his wife Alex and his sons. May they know this is a better world for all the laughs Johnny has given us. Rest in Peace, Johnny.

Faye Elam - January 30, 2005 at 12:00 AM

SD

“ I have many good memories as a child watching my father and mother laughing with Johnny Carson late at night. God rest your soul and God bless your family.

Stephanie E. Diaz - January 30, 2005 at 12:00 AM

RL

“ I wanted to give my condolences and Thanks to Alexis and Sons of Johnny Carson. Thank You for sharing him with us. I lost my father Lucas Lopez Sr. last year and I personally know how it feels to lose a loved one, especially a Father.
My fondest memor

Rick Lopez - January 30, 2005 at 12:00 AM

CA

“ Alexis and children,
I would like to extend my condolences to you all. I only saw Johnny on TV, and he always brought a smile to my face. The characters he portrayed were hilarious and so funny. I know he brought great joy to millions of people. I will k

cathy - January 27, 2005 at 12:00 AM

SS

“ Extending our heart felt condolences on the LOSS of your loved one.

Staff at Mission Park Funeral Chapels South - January 26, 2005 at 12:00 AM