

## The Honeymooners - Part 2

Episode for class:

**A Woman's Work Is Never Done** (Aired October 27, 1955)

Frank Marth was called to play Mr. Wilson about two hours before the show went on, after the original actor didn't work out. You can see him reading from a script after he sits down.

The Honeymooners originally aired from 1955 to 1956. It was created by Jackie Gleason and based on a recurring comedy sketch of the same name that had been part of Gleason's variety show.

**Frank Marth** (Mr. Wilson) - was born in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan. Early in his career, he worked in radio as an announcer, commentator and disc jockey in New York City and New Jersey.

Marth's motion picture credits include roles in films such as *Madame X*, *Madigan*, *Pendulum*, *The Lost Man*, *Marooned* and *Telefon*.

On television, Marth appeared in *Perry Mason*, *The Big Valley*, *The Wild, Wild West*, *Mannix*, *Hogan's Heroes*, *Barnaby Jones*, *Mission: Impossible*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *The Fugitive*, *Cannon*, *The Invaders*, *Gunsmoke*, *The F.B.I.*, *The Streets of San Francisco*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *Dallas* and *M\*A\*S\*H*.

Marth made regular appearances on *Jackie Gleason and His American Scene Magazine* and *The Jackie Gleason Show*. Additionally, he played various recurring and one-time roles on *The Honeymooners*.

**Betty Garde** (Thelma) - was born Katharine Elizabeth Garde in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She began appearing on the stage in the early 1920's. Garde made her Broadway debut in *Easy Come, Easy Go*

in 1925. Standing 5'10", she was cast as Aunt Eller in the original 1943 Broadway production of *Oklahoma!*

After joining CBS in 1933, Garde began to work in radio, performing on shows including *Mrs. Wiggs Of The Cabbage Patch*, *The Eddie Cantor Show*, *Perry Mason* and *Theatre Guild On The Air*. In 1934, she worked with Orson Welles on the CBS Radio series *The American School Of The Air* and later performed in Welles' radio series including *Les Misérables*, *The Mercury Theatre On The Air*, *The Campbell Playhouse* and *Ceiling Unlimited*.

Among her notable performances are in the film noir productions *Call Northside 777*, *Cry of the City* and *Caged*. Her television credits include *The Gabby Hayes Show*, *The Honeymooners*, *The Real McCoys*, *The Untouchables* and *The Twilight Zone*.

**Jackie Gleason** (Ralph Kramden) - was born **Herbert Walton Gleason Jr.** at 364 Chauncey Street in the Stuyvesant Heights (now Bedford–Stuyvesant) section of Brooklyn. Gleason worked his way up to a job at New York's Club 18, where insulting its patrons was the order of the day.

By the time he was 24, Gleason appeared in films: first for Warner Brothers as Jackie C. Gleason in such films as *Navy Blues* and *All Through The Night*. Next for Columbia Pictures in *Tramp, Tramp, Tramp*. Then at Twentieth Century-Fox he played Glenn Miller Orchestra bassist Ben Beck in *Orchestra Wives*.

Gleason's big break was in 1949 when he landed work with the DuMont Television Network with his first role as Chester A. Riley for the television version of *The Life Of Riley*, replacing William Bendix, who was unable to take the role due to contractual issues.

In 1950, comedy writer Harry Crane, whom Gleason knew from his days as a stand-up comedian in New York, recommended Gleason for DuMont's *Cavalcade Of Stars* variety hour. The program initially had rotating hosts. Gleason soon became permanent host as he added dance numbers and developed sketch characters that he would refine over the next decade. Gleason became enough of a presence that CBS convinced him to join their network in 1952. Renamed *The Jackie Gleason Show*, the program became the country's second-highest-rated television show during the 1954–1955 season.

The *Honeymooners* originated from a sketch Gleason was developing with his show's writers. He said he had an idea where he wanted a skit with a smart, quiet wife and her very vocal husband. He described that while the couple had their fights, underneath it all, they loved each other. Titles for the sketch were tossed around until someone came up with *The Honeymooners*.

**Art Carney** (Ed Norton) - was born Arthur William Matthew Carney, the youngest of six sons in Mount Vernon, New York.

Carney was a comic singer with the Horace Heidt orchestra, which was heard often on radio during the 1930's on the successful *Pot O' Gold*, the first big-money giveaway show in 1939–41. Carney's film career began with an uncredited role in *Pot O' Gold*, the radio program's spin-off feature film, playing a member of Heidt's band.

One of his radio roles during the 1940's was the first *Red Lantern on Land Of The Lost*. In 1943 he played Billy Oldham on *Joe and Ethel Turp*, based on Damon Runyon stories. He also appeared on *The Henry Morgan Show* in 1946–1947.

In 1950, Jackie Gleason was starring on the *cavalcade of stars* playing many different characters. Gleason's regular characters included Charlie Bratten, a lunchroom loudmouth who insisted on spoiling a neighboring patron's meal.

Carney played Bratten's mild-mannered victim, Clem Finch. Gleason and Carney developed a good working chemistry. As a result, Gleason recruited Carney to appear in other sketches, including the domestic-comedy skits featuring *The Honeymooners*. Carney gained lifelong fame for his portrayal of sewer worker Ed Norton, opposite Jackie Gleason's Ralph Kramden. The success of these skits resulted in the famous situation comedy *The Honeymooners* and *The Honeymooners* revivals that followed. Carney was nominated for seven Emmy Awards and won six times.

**Audrey Meadows** (Alice Kramden) - was born Audrey Cotter in New York City. After high school, Meadows sang in the Broadway musical *Top Banana* before becoming a regular on television in *The Bob and Ray Show*. She was next hired to play Alice on *The Jackie Gleason Show* replacing Pert Kelton was forced to leave the show due to blacklisting. When *The Honeymooners* became a half-hour situation comedy on CBS, Meadows continued in the role. She returned to play Alice after a long hiatus, when Gleason produced occasional *Honeymooners* specials during the 1970's.

Meadows was the only member of the *Honeymooners* cast to earn residual royalties after the "Classic 39" episodes of the show from 1955 to 1956 started airing in reruns. Her brother Edward, a lawyer, had inserted a clause into her original contract whereby she would be paid if the shows were re-broadcast.

**Joyce Randolph** (Trixie Norton) - Born in Detroit, Michigan, she moved to New York City in 1943 to pursue an acting career where she took roles on Broadway and landed various television roles.

In 1951, she was seen in a *Clorets* commercial by Jackie Gleason and was asked to appear in a skit on *Cavalcade Of Stars*, Gleason's variety show on the DuMont Television Network. Soon after, she was cast as Trixie in *The Honeymooners*.

In a September 2015 interview, Randolph said that she did not portray Trixie Norton in *The Honeymooners* revivals due to personal and geographic reasons. Plus, Randolph said that Gleason considered her to be "the quintessential Trixie."

She also said that asking Gleason to give her more lines was out of the question. "You don't even talk to Jackie, let alone ask for anything," Randolph said. "He didn't talk much, and he didn't like to rehearse much." Randolph talked about a hectic workload for filming the show, with getting all 39 episodes shot within a calendar year.

Joyce Randolph (Trixie) was the last surviving cast member of *The Honeymooners* until she passed away at the age of 99 in her home at Manhattan's Upper West Side on January 13, 2024.

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In an October 18, 1985, *Tonight Show* interview with Jackie Gleason, Johnny Carson stated that he appeared on the ill-fated program *You're In The Picture*. Surviving clips do not show him involved. However, actress and comedienne Pat Carroll confirmed that Carson HAD been involved in the episode, but he left before taping: "Johnny Carson was supposed to be on it. But he did one rehearsal and we never saw him again. He knew better than we did. Ha!"

The rumors of a second episode being taped, but never aired appear to be untrue, as Carroll stated that she and the other panelists were ready to go on stage to tape the second episode, but wound up instead being a backstage witness to Gleason's apology, causing her to wonder why she was even in the studio in the first place.

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## REFERENCES

Internet Movie Data Base

Wikipedia

