

# My Favorite Martian

**Episode for class** - Martin The Mannequin

Aired February 6, 1966

*My Favorite Martian* aired beginning on September 29, 1963 through May 1, 1966. This series had a total of 107 episodes.

*My Favorite Martian* was the first of the "fantasy" situation comedies on American television during the mid-1960's featuring characters who could do extraordinary things, predating *My Living Doll* (1964–1965), *Bewitched* (1964–1972) and *I Dream of Jeannie* (1965–1970).

The William Morris agency put together the deal for *My Favorite Martian*, pairing creator John L. Greene with producer Jack Chertok. According to a 1963 article in the Rocky Mountain News, producer Chertok was looking for a TV project when he found Greene's *My Favorite Martian* pilot teleplay at the bottom of a pile of scripts at the Morris agency. Chertok announced that he liked the idea, much to the dismay of the agency men who told him that the premise for such a series had been read and rejected by every producer who had ever seen it, "-and it always winds up at the bottom of the stack." Chertok replied, "That's why I want it."

The first seven episodes of the first season showed a copyright date of MCMXLIII (1943) instead of MCMLXIII (1963). This was corrected in episode eight.

Ray Walston and Bill Bixby were the immediate choices for the lead roles. The part of the landlady was originally envisioned as an older woman, but when Pamela Britton interviewed for the role, she successfully convinced the producer that Mrs. Brown should be more youthful, as it would allow greater possibilities for some romance in the stories.

The pilot episode premiered on CBS Sunday, September 29, 1963 at 7:30PM to great reviews, earning a rating of 20.3 with a 33 share. The Los Angeles Herald-Examiner reported *My Favorite Martian* as number 1 in its viewer poll for best new series. *My Favorite Martian* ranked #10 of all primetime programs with an overall average rating of 26.3. The show remained in its Sunday 7:30PM time slot throughout its three year run.

*My Favorite Martian* was an independently produced show. The sound stage facilities were rented from Desilu and the first 7 episodes were filmed at Desilu's Cahuenga Studios. Filming was later moved to Soundstage 10 on the Desilu Gower lot.

Throughout the series everyone worked a backbreaking schedule. *My Favorite Martian* filmed on 5 days of the week because it was saddled with time-consuming special effects. For this reason, the actors were compelled to film with virtually no rehearsal. If filming on an episode was completed at 2:30 PM, the next shows' scripts were thrust into the actors' hands, with just a run-through for the camera and the actual filming began again. Ray Walston had said that they sometimes did 75 set-ups a day.

The Martian's antennae operated by remote control. According to the book "TV's Biggest Hits", a musical instrument, a combination of a theremin and ondes martinet was used to provide the sounds which accompanied the Martian's antennae rising or when he used his levitation powers.

For the third season CBS chose *My Favorite Martian* as one of 9 primetime shows to be filmed in color as part of its change-over to regularly broadcasting color television. Along with *My Mother the Car* and *Voyage To The Bottom Of The Sea*, *My Favorite Martian* became one of only three sci-fi/fantasy shows of the 1965-1966 season filmed in color, as *Bewitched*, *I Dream Of Jeannie*, *The Munsters*, *The Addams Family*, *The Smothers Brothers Show* and *Lost In Space* were still being filmed in black and white.

In the summer of 1965, Lucille Ball, head of Desilu, decided that the studio needed the soundstages being rented to Jack Chertok productions, as the studio was committed to developing a new series called *Star Trek*. Since Jack Chertok's other series, *My Living Doll* (which was also filmed at Desilu) had been canceled, it seemed expedient to ask him to take "Martian" elsewhere for its third season production site. *My Favorite Martian* moved to MGM Culver Studios in order to take advantage of not only its color filming facilities, but its backlot as well.

There was not one clear answer given for *My Favorite Martian's* cancellation in March 1966. Due to Ray Walston's dissatisfaction with the direction of the scripts, he wanted to limit his appearances on the program. CBS was not interested in this concept and cancelled the series. It was then offered to ABC, but they also passed, due to the lack of Mr. Walston's full-time participation in the show.

In 1992 talks were underway for a reunion of *My Favorite Martian* as a TV Movie. Bill Bixby and Ray Walston had agreed to recreate their roles and Bixby was slated to direct the film. The project was at the point of getting the rights from Jack Chertok, but very sadly Bill Bixby's health had begun to decline at that time and the movie was abandoned.

**Ray Walston** (Uncle Martin) - began his acting career in 1939, receiving his first big break when cast as the reporter in the Ben Hecht-Charles MacArthur classic *The Front Page*. In 1955, Ray Walston won a Tony Award as best male musical comedy star in the production of *Damn Yankees*. He reprised that role in the 1958 film version.

Among his other film roles include *South Pacific*, *The Apartment*, *Kiss Me Stupid* and *Paint Your Wagon*. In addition to *My Favorite Martian*, Walston won two prime time Emmy Awards as Best Supporting Actor in the series *Picket Fences*. Ray Walston was awarded a star on Hollywood's Walk Of Fame at 7070 Hollywood Blvd. on December 8, 1995.

**Bill Bixby** (Tim O'Hara) - was born in San Francisco, California as Wilfred Bailey Everett Bixby III. He attended San Francisco City College, where he majored in drama. Bixby transferred to the University of California-Berkeley, where he majored in the pre-law program. After almost graduating, he left his native San Francisco to go to Los Angeles, where he became a lifeguard and a bellhop.

He made his television debut in an episode of *The Many Loves Of Dobie Gillis* and many other roles, most notably as "Charles Raymond" in *The Joey Bishop Show*. After *My Favorite Martian*, he returned to television as the widowed father, "Tom Corbett", on *The Courtship Of Eddie's Father*. In 1973, Bixby was offered a chance to star in a lead role as "Anthony Dorian/Anthony Blake," on his first and only NBC dramatic series called, *The Magician*. In late 1977, he was offered the role of "Dr. David Bruce Banner," in a two-hour pilot called, *The Incredible Hulk*. When it debuted as a mid-season replacement, it became the #1 show in the United States and in many other countries.

In 1983, Bixby, once again, came back to series television, acting in, producing and directing his last sitcom, *Goodnight, Beantown*. The series lasted from April 1983 to January 1984.

Bixby had success as a director in several television series such as *Sledge Hammer*, *Room 222*, *Mannix* and *Blossom*. He was nominated three times for a Primetime Emmy Award.

**Pamela Britton** (Lorelei Brown) - was born Armilda Jane Owen in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Her mother was Ethel Owen, a prominent stage, radio and early television actress. She first used Gloria Jane Owen as her stage name, but not wanting to trade on her mother's reputation, chose Pamela from a British book and then Britton to emphasize its source. Britton preferred comedy and singing rather than drama. She was discovered by band leader Don McGuire at a party, was hired as his singer and toured with his band. She also sang at New York's Latin Quarter nightclub.

Her big break came when she was cast as Celeste Holm's understudy in the Broadway company of *Oklahoma!* When the show went on tour, she took over Holm's role as Ado Annie.

Next, she was cast as Frank Sinatra's girlfriend in *Anchors Aweigh* but the film roles she was offered afterward weren't satisfying and she went on suspension to play Meg Brockie in *Brigadoon* on Broadway and on tour for three years.

Britton co-starred in *D.O.A.* opposite Edmond O'Brien and Beverly Garland and played Blondie Bumstead in the TV show based on the comic strip. But it is as the ditzy landlady Lorelei Brown on *My Favorite Martian* that many people remember her.

**Alan Hewitt** (Detective Bill Brennan) - was born and educated in New York City and entered Dartmouth College when he was 15, graduating in 1934 at the age of 19. His acting debut was in a school production at age 10.

Hewitt was an accomplished character actor who had a lengthy career, including parts in well-known programs, including *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *77 Sunset Strip*, *Leave It to Beaver*, *The Donna Reed Show*, *Dr. Kildare*, *Bewitched*, *I Dream of Jeannie*, *The Lucy Show*, *F Troop*, *Ironside*, *The Bob Newhart Show*, *The Cara Williams Show*. He made four guest appearances on *Perry Mason*, in three of which he portrayed the murderer.

Among the motion pictures in which Hewitt appeared are *A Private's Affair*, *That Touch of Mink*, *Days Of Wine And Roses*, *Follow That Dream*, *How To Murder Your Wife*, *Sweet Charity* and *The Barefoot Executive*.

The character of Detective Bill Brennan in *My Favorite Martian*, was introduced in the fifth episode of the second season. Alan Hewitt interviewed for the part that summer, being told it might work out to a semi-regular role. The producers liked his performance and the character was written into 13 episodes of the second season and 14 shows in the last season.

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# Topper Notes

## Episode For Class

Astrology - Aired February 5, 1954

*Topper* was a fantasy sitcom television series based on two 1926 novels *Topper* and *Topper Takes A Trip* by Thorne Smith. *Topper* was made into a 1937 film starring Cary Grant as George Kerby, Constance Bennett as Marion Kerby and Roland Young as Cosmo Topper. Two filmed sequels followed: *Topper Takes A Trip*, in 1939 and *Topper Returns* in 1941. Roland Young reprised the role in the 1945 NBC radio summer replacement series *The Adventures Of Topper*.

The books were adapted to the television series, *Topper*, beginning in 1953 with Leo G. Carroll as Cosmo Topper along with Robert Sterling and Anne Jeffreys as the ghosts. 78 episodes were made. Broadway composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim wrote 11 episodes for *Topper's* first season with George Oppenheimer. The producer was John W. Loveton along with his agent, Bernard L. Schubert who was credited as co-producer.

The series was broadcast on CBS from October 9, 1953, to July 15, 1955. It starred Leo G. Carroll in the title role. *Topper* earned an Emmy nomination for Best Situation Comedy in 1954.

The episodes were filmed at the Hal Roach Studios in Culver City, California.

**Leo G. Carroll** (Cosmo Topper) - was born in Weedon Bec, Northamptonshire, England. Carroll made his stage debut in 1912. Next, he performed in London and on Broadway. His American stage debut came in *The Vortex* in 1925. Carroll moved to Hollywood and made his film debut in *Sadie McKee* in 1934.

He usually played doctors or butlers, but he made appearances as Marley's ghost in *A Christmas Carol* in 1938 and as Joseph in *Wuthering Heights* in 1939.

In a career of over 40 years, he appeared in six Alfred Hitchcock films including *Spellbound*, *Strangers On A Train* and *North By Northwest*. He was also in four television series, *Topper*, *Going My Way*, *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* and *The Girl From U.N.C.L.E.* He was one of the first actors to appear in two different television series as the same character.

Leo G. Carroll appeared in spots on the first two regular episodes of *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, the series that had replaced *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* He appears as Mr. Waverly in the very first episode party scene where he is seen using a pen communicator to call Kuryakin to report that he believes he has found THRUSH headquarters.

**Lee Patrick** (Henrietta Topper) - debuted on Broadway in November of 1922 in *The Bunch and Judy*. In September of 1924 she returned to Broadway in an 8-week run of *The Green Beetle*. She continued working on the stage through 1937.

Patrick had the starring role in her first film, *Strange Cargo* in 1929. In *The Casino Murder Case* for MGM, she had a bit part as a nurse in the film, which brought her together for the first time with future *Topper* star, Leo G. Carroll.

Her other film appearances include *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Sisters*, *Footsteps in the Dark*, *Now, Voyager*; *Mrs. Parkington*, *Mildred Pierce*, *Wake Up and Dream*, *Caged*, *There's No Business Like Show Business*, *Vertigo*, *Auntie Mame*, *Pillow Talk*, *Summer and Smoke* and *7 Faces of Dr. Lao*.

In addition to her role as Mrs. Cosmo Topper, Lee Patrick could be seen on television programs, *Mr. Adams and Eve*, *The Rifleman*, *The Real McCoys*, *Hazel* and *I Married Joan*.

**Robert Sterling** (George Kerby) - was born William Sterling Hart in New Castle, Pennsylvania. After signing a contract with Columbia Pictures in 1939, he changed his name to Robert Sterling to avoid any confusion with silent film western star William S. Hart.

1939 was a very busy year for Robert Sterling. He was in *Only Angels Have Wings*, *Missing Daughters*, a short with Buster Keaton, *Pest from the West*, *Good Girls Go to Paris*, *The Man They Could Not Hang*, *Golden Boy*, *The Gates of Alcatraz*, *A Woman Is the Judge*, *The Story of Charles Goodyear*, *Scandal Sheet*, *Mr Smith Goes to Washington*, *Beware Spooks!*, *Blondie Brings up Baby*, *The Amazing Mr Williams*, *Glove Slingers*, *The Awful Goofer* and *Crime's End*. He also made films at 20th Century Fox and MGM.

Robert Sterling will always be best remembered as George Kerby on *Topper* from 1953 to 1955. He guest starred on the shows *The Loretta Young Show*, *Lux Video Theatre*, *Star Stage*, *The 20th Century-Fox Hour*, *The Ford Television Theatre*, *Cavalcade of America* and *Telephone Time*.

Along with his wife, Anne Jefferys, they co-starred in another comedy series, *Love That Jill*. Sterling and Jeffreys portrayed heads of rival modeling agencies in New York City. The series lasted for only 13 episodes. Throughout the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's, he continued to guest on several other programs.

Robert Sterling has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame located at 1709 Vine Street.

**Anne Jeffreys** (Marion Kerby) - was born Annie Jeffreys Carmichael in Goldsboro, North Carolina. At a young age, she was trained in voice and became an accomplished soprano. She became a member of the New York Municipal Opera Company on a scholarship and sang the lead at Carnegie Hall in such presentations as *La bohème*, *Traviata* and *Pagliacci*.

Her operatic career ended when she was cast in a stage musical revue, *Fun For The Money* which led to her being cast in her first movie role, in *I Married An Angel* starring Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald.

Under contract to RKO and Republic Studios during the 1940's, she made appearances as Tess Trueheart in the Dick Tracy series and the Frank Sinatra musical *Step Lively*. She also appeared in *Zombies On Broadway*, *Riffraff* and as John Dillinger's moll in *Dillinger*. Her work on stage and in motion pictures continued through the 1940's and 1950's. Along with her husband, Robert Sterling, she too is best remembered as Marian Kerby on *Topper*.

After a semi-retirement in the 1960's, she appeared on *Love, American Style*; *L.A. Law*, *Murder, She Wrote*, *Baywatch* as David Hasselhoff's mother and a recurring role on *Falcon Crest*. In 1979, she guest starred on *Battlestar Galactica* as a love interest for a part played by Fred Astaire. From 1984 to 2004, she was on the soap opera *General Hospital* and its spinoff, *Port Charles*.

Anne Jeffreys has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame located at 1501 Vine Street. It was dedicated February 8, 1960. In 1997, she was a recipient of a Golden Boot Award as one who "furthered the tradition of the western on film and in television." Finally in 1998, she received the Living Legacy Award from the Women's International Center.

**Kathleen Freeman** (Katie) - began her career at the age of two, dancing in her parents' vaudeville act called Dixon and Freeman. She attended the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) as a music major to be a classical pianist. According to her, "I got in a play and got a laugh. I became part of a theater group that came from UCLA, the Circle Players, which got to be at one point fairly internationally famous. And then we split off from that and started our own, Player's Ring and Gallery Theater".

In 1948, Peggy Webber saw Freeman on stage at the Circle Theatre and hired her for the LIVE local series, *Treasures of Literature*. This was her first television job.

In addition to teaching acting classes in the Los Angeles, she appeared *Buckskin*, *The Bob Cummings Show*, *The Donna Reed Show*, *The Lucy Show*, *Hogan's Heroes* and had a co-starring role with Dom DeLuise in the sitcom *Lotsa Luck*.

Freeman was equally popular in motion pictures as Jean Hagen's diction coach in *Singin' in The Rain* and as a favorite foil of Jerry Lewis in 11 films such as *The Disorderly Orderly*, *The Nutty Professor* and many other films.

She made her Broadway debut on October 26, 2000 in *The Full Monty*. For her role as Jeannette Burmeister, the company's pianist, she was nominated for a 2001 Tony Award and won a Theatre World Award.

**Dorothy Adams** (Madame Caza) - specialized in roles as servants, maids or pioneering types. Acted at the Pasadena Playhouse with her husband Byron Foulger. She also lectured in theatre arts at UCLA for nine years until 1967.

Adams made many television appearances during the 1950's in *Gunsmoke*, *The Adventures of Kit Carson*, *Dragnet*, *Perry Mason*, and *Leave It To Beaver*. Her best known role was as Wilma Cameron's mother in *The Best Years of Our Lives* in 1946.

**Thurston Hall** (Mr. Schuyler) - At 22, Hall was in the first stage production of *Mrs. Wiggs Of The Cabbage Patch*. His film career began with silent films in 1915, appearing in 250 films between 1915 and 1957. He is remembered for his portrayal, especially during the later years of his career, of often pompous, blustering authority figures. Early on during his silent film career, he supported Theda Bara in her vamp dramas. Hall's best remembered television role was as Mr. Schuyler, the boss of Cosmo Topper in *Topper*.

**Buck** (Neil) - Neil's first appearance in the sitcom is as a real dog, rescuing hikers and skiers who run into trouble in the Alps. The catch is that Neil is fond of the brandy he carries. He stumbles into the mountain scene where the trapped skiers await him. Neil promptly lies down, totally smashed.

The skiers awaiting rescue are the Kerbys, a wealthy couple. They are on a European ski trip to celebrate their fifth wedding anniversary. The avalanche that overtakes them would have been survivable if Neil hadn't been drunk.

Neil was owned by well-known dog trainer Carl Spitz. He was the grand-nephew of the St. Bernard who played Buck in the film, *The Call Of The Wild*, starring Clark Gable. Spitz also owned that Buck. Neil was the second highest paid dog on television during the 1950's. Only Lassie, who was owned by Rudd Weatherwax earned more money.

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## **REFERENCES**

Internet Movie Data Base  
Wikipedia  
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