

RIP Sid Caesar (1922 - 2014)

Written by The Projectionist

Wednesday, 12 February 2014 15:33 - Last Updated Wednesday, 12 February 2014 16:46



Sad news for the entertainment community today, as television comedy pioneer Sid Caesar has passed away. He was 91.

Caesar was the youngest of three sons born to Jewish immigrants living in Yonkers, New York. Sid's father, Max had emigrated from Poland, while his mother Ida was originally from the Russian Empire. The "Caesar" moniker had been given to Max by an immigration official on Ellis Island.

Caesar's parents ran a 24-hour luncheonette where Sid waited tables, and that was where Sid learned to mimic the rhythm and accents of the diverse clientele. Caesar referred to it as "double-talk," a "skill" he would use throughout his long and successful comedy career.

Sid's older brother David was his comedic cohort and cheering section, often creating comedic skits they performed for the family.

At the age of fourteen, Sid became a saxophonist, working at resorts in the Catskill Mountains. There, he occasionally performed in comedic sketches.

RIP Sid Caesar (1922 - 2014)

Written by The Projectionist

Wednesday, 12 February 2014 15:33 - Last Updated Wednesday, 12 February 2014 16:46

In 1939 Caesar enlisted in the United States Coast Guard, and was stationed in Brooklyn, NY. There, he played in military revues and shows.

Sid met his future wife, Florence Levy in the summer of 1942. They were married in July of 1943. The couple had three children: Michele, Rick, and Karen.

Joining the musician's union, Sid played with Shep Fields, Claude Thornhill, Charlie Spivak, Art Mooney and Benny Goodman. Still an enlisted man, Caesar was ordered to Palm Beach, Florida, where he joined a service review called "Tars and Spars." The director of that show, Max Liebman later produced Caesar's first television series. Caesar began to do stand-up bits between songs, and as the revue toured nationally, it became his first comedy gig.

Following the war, The Caesar family moved to Hollywood, and there Sid starred in a 1946 film version of the Tars and Spars revue at Columbia Pictures. Sid received a few offers to play sidekick roles in the movies, however he moved the family back to New York, and became the opening act for Joe E. Lewis at the Copacabana nightclub.

A reunion with Max Liebman led to a contract with the William Morris Agency. Following a nationwide tour, Sid performed in a Broadway revue "Make Mine Mahattan," which featured a bit Caesar wrote the lines, lyrics, and music for, and which he also sang, acted, double-talked, and pantomined.

Sid Caesar began his television career with an appearance on Milton Berle's Texaco Star Theater. In 1949 Caesar got his first series, which was on the NBC television network, The Admiral Broadway Revue with Imogene Coca. The Friday evening show, broadcast simultaneously on the NBC and DuMont networks, was an immediate smash hit.

RIP Sid Caesar (1922 - 2014)

Written by The Projectionist

Wednesday, 12 February 2014 15:33 - Last Updated Wednesday, 12 February 2014 16:46

Ironically, the show was cancelled after 26 weeks due to being too successful! The show's sponsor, television and appliance maker Admiral, couldn't keep up with the demand for new television sets, and had to use the money they had spent on sponsoring the show to build a new television factory!

February of 1950 found Caesar headlining a new series, *Your Show of Shows*, a 90-minute variety program running on Saturday night. The show, was a mix of scripted and improvised comedy, movie and television satires, Caesar's monologues, musical guests, and large production numbers.

The show was responsible for bringing together the incredible comedy team of Caesar, Carl Reiner, Howard Morris, and Imogene Coca.

Caesar won his first Emmy in 1952. The show ran for 160 episodes, ending in June of 1954.

Sid Caesar returned a few months later with *Caesar's Hour*, a one-hour variety show. *Caesar's Hour* was followed briefly by *Sid Caesar Invites You* in 1958.

In the following years, Caesar appeared on television, on stage, and in the movies. Several television specials evolved into a one-season run of the 1963-1964 *Sid Caesar Show*, which ran on alternate weeks with a show starring Edie Adams. (Sid Caesar and Edie Adams also starred together as husband and wife in the 1963 screwball comedy *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*.)

RIP Sid Caesar (1922 - 2014)

Written by The Projectionist

Wednesday, 12 February 2014 15:33 - Last Updated Wednesday, 12 February 2014 16:46

Caesar continued to make appearances on television and movies the rest of his life, appearing in such films as Silent Movie, History of the World, Part I, Airport 1975, and as Coach Calhoun in Grease and its sequel, Grease 2, in 1982.

Caesar made numerous appearances at award and anniversary shows, staying active in the later years of his life.

Sid Caesar died on February 12, 2014, at his home in Beverly Hills, California following a short illness.

We are all poorer for losing him, but all the better for having had him in our lives. May God bless you Mr. Caesar, and I know you're entertaining him with your double-talk act right at this moment. Thank you for years of entertainment, sir. You will be missed.

(Thanks to [Wikipedia](#), for the information about Mr. Caesar's long and storied career...)