



MDA TELETHON

ED McMAHON

Ed McMahon is a man whose career has surpassed his own dream. From his first magnetic attraction to broadcasting, at the impressionable age of six, he has gone on to transform the job of announcer into a star-quality role and become one of the most recognizable, respected and popular men in his chosen field.

Famous for his 30 year stint as announcer on **THE TONIGHT SHOW STARRING JOHNNY CARSON**, he followed that success with hosting the popular syndicated show, **ED McMAHON'S STAR SEARCH**. plus numerous performances as host on specials and telethons, and his activities on TV and radio commercials make McMahon more familiar to most Americans than their own next-door-neighbor.

McMahon's infatuation with "the air" started in his boyhood at his grandparents' house in Lowell, Massachusetts, the site of many of his fondest early memories. His grandfather converted the whole house into a giant radio-aerial by wrapping it with wire, and through a crystal set & homemade headphones, six-year-old Edward heard the distant sound of KDKA, Pittsburgh. He was hooked! By the age of eleven he was practicing the techniques of announcing by reading Time Magazine into his flashlight--Using it as a substitute microphone. Soon he was experimenting with disc-jockey patter, cueing up records on his grandmother's Victrola.

Another important step was McMahon's discovery of his own natural talent as a salesman. Upon hearing that he could earn a bicycle by selling subscriptions of *The Saturday Evening Post*, he sold three the same afternoon. Soon he had not only the bicycle but a skill on which he knew he could rely.

McMahon's first professional stint as an announcer, at the age of fifteen, was on the sound-truck of a carnival, ballyhooing the midway attractions. By eighteen he'd had three summers as announcer for a traveling bingo game and had earned enough money to enroll in Boston College. He also landed a job announcing on radio station WLLH in Lowell.

World War II interrupted both college and career. McMahon joined the Marines, got his wings at Pensacola Naval Base, and became a Fighter-pilot Instructor where he taught young students carrier landings and was a test-pilot in fighters, including the sophisticated Corsair.

Ed McMahon Bio/Page 2

After the war he returned to school for a Speech and Drama major at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. With a wife and child to support, he worked part-time selling stainless steel cookware door to door, and lived quite well. During the summer he pitched products on the boardwalk in Atlantic City, working his way up to selling the prestige item of the profession -- the Morris Metric Vegetable Slicer. His smooth pitch and forthright manner were earning him the then-astronomical sum of \$500 per week.

Earning his Bachelor of Arts in 1949, he moved to Philadelphia and into television, tackling his career in earnest. Soon he was host, writer and producer of more than a dozen different, TV shows: a breakfast show, a cooking show at noon, host for a movie program, a pop-music record program, etc. He was Philadelphia's "Mr. Television."

Again war intervened. In Korea, and once more in the Marines, McMahon flew 85 combat missions and rose to the rank of full Colonel. (In all he's seen 6 years of active service and a total of 23 years in the reserves. He was commissioned an Honorary Brigadier General in the California Air National Guard.)

By the time he returned to Philadelphia, television had grown in his absence and the only slot open was a five-minute potpourri segment at the end of the 11:00 news.

McMahon's showmanship prevailed, and his tiny slice of time attracted attention. For instance, when Ginger Rogers was in town, she could not appear on TV because of her movie-studio contract, so McMahon interviewed her while showing only her hand on camera. "This is the elegant hand of Ginger Rogers..." Similar flashes of showmanship pushed that half-hour of news into the top of the ratings.

During 1956, while preparing for a show one day, his attention was distracted by a figure on the station's CBS monitor, a wiry young man giving off some hilarious body language. McMahon turned up the volume in time to hear the tiny image say, "My name is Johnny Carson."

Within a year, McMahon got to meet Carson in-person when he was searching for a new announcer for his daytime quiz show called **WHO DO YOU TRUST?**

McMahon traveled to New York and had the briefest interview--- about seven minutes. After receiving polite expressions of thanks for making the trip, McMahon was back on the train for the City of Brotherly Love, wondering what had gone wrong. Three weeks later he got a call from Carson's show that began, "When you report on Monday..."

Nobody had bothered to inform McMahon, but he and Carson had clicked immediately. Their interactive chemistry was perfect in style, sense of humor, appearance, and in their mutual enjoyment of each other.

Ed McMahon Bio/Page 3

McMahon's first duty on the program was to rattle off a list of sponsors, a task he suddenly had to speed up when Carson put a match to the bottom of the list. Then, when the 6-foot 4-inch McMahon lumbered on stage, Carson did one of his patented double-takes and in his best mad-scientist voice, exclaimed, "Lothar - you startled me."

After four years of polishing their interplay, the team of Carson and McMahon took over **THE TONIGHT SHOW**. All day long before their first broadcast, McMahon mulled over the problem of a suitable dramatic introduction for their premiere appearance. Minutes before air-time he remembered the success he'd had in radio with rolling his RRR's. A few moments later the trademark "Heeere's Johnny" was born, and thirty years later, on May 22, 1992, history was made when the legendary late night institution taped its farewell show.

Being the Man-for-All Seasons on **THE TONIGHT SHOW** was only part of McMahon's overflowing appointment book. Over the years he moved more into acting, appearing in theatrical and television features with such stars as Jane Fonda, Martin Sheen, George Segal, Beau Bridges and Jim Brown. He also appeared on Broadway in the comedy **THE IMPOSSIBLE YEARS**.

As one of America's most recognizable personalities, he is much sought-after as a host in his own right. McMahon hosted the popular syndicated show (and weekend ratings winner), **ED MCMAHON'S STAR SEARCH**. Over 100,000 performers have auditioned and **STAR SEARCH** has been the launching pad for the careers of many successful show business personalities including Lara Flynn Boyle; Sharon Stone; Dennis Miller; Rosie O'Donnell; Britney Spears; Usher; Martin Lawrence, Drew Carey and a myriad of others.

Ed has co-hosted with Dick Clark the NBC specials TV's **BLOOPERS AND PRACTICAL JOKES**. In 1991, he hosted **HOW DO THEY DO THAT?** on the NBC radio network. McMahon was host of the game show **WHODUNNIT?** and of countless special events such as the annual **MACY'S THANKSGIVING DAY PARADE; AMERICA'S JUNIOR MISS PAGEANT; THE MOTHER'S DAY SHOW FROM LAS VEGAS;** and the **NIGHT OF STARS**, also from Las Vegas.

He has starred along with Tom Arnold in his first sitcom **THE TOM SHOW** on the WB network. Ed also did a segment for Amercian Family Publishers on the Richard Simmons show, **DREAM MAKER**. Ed McMahon had another talent show of which he not only hosted, but produced called **ED MCMAHON'S NEXT BIG STAR** on the PAX television network.

He is commercial spokesman for several major corporations. His thirty-year stint with Anheuser Busch has made him as closely associated with the popular brew as their trademark Clydesdale horses. He has appeared in commercials for Nabisco, Choice Hotels, Peoples Benefit Life, Wickes Furniture, Mercedes Benz, Colonial Penn Life Insurance and spokesman for the new Neighborhood Watch Program.

Ed McMahon Bio/Page 4

In 1981, McMahon was nominated for a Grammy for his rendition of Twas' the Night Before Christmas (Orson Wells took the Grammy). He's authored four books: **HERE'S ED**, an autobiography, **THE ART OF PUBLIC SPEAKING, SUPERSELLING, and FOR LAUGHING OUT LOUD...MY LIFE AND GOOD TIMES**, his autobiography, co-written with best-selling author, David Fisher. His most recent book, **HERE'S JOHNNY, MY MEMORIES OF JOHNNY CARSON, THE TONIGHT SHOW, AND 46 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP** made the New York Times Best Seller's List within weeks of hitting the book stores.

McMahon acknowledges the duty involved with fame and puts his popularity to work for good causes. He has co-hosted the annual **JERRY LEWIS MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY TELETHON** for 40 years, and is a Board Member and Vice-President of the Muscular Dystrophy Association. He is also on the board of The Marine Corps Scholarship Fund. He was named honorary chairman of the Flying Leatherneck Marine Museum at MCAS Mira Mar. He was President of the Catholic University Alumni Association for four years. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Horatio Alger Association. He received their award in 1984 and each year he produces and emcees all of their activities in Washington, DC.

And now Ed McMahon, the broadcaster has come full circle with his syndicated radio show "*The Ed McMahon Show*" which airs on Cable Radio Network as well as USA Radio Network. His show explores everything that relates to modern day living and deals with an array of issues that inspire our lifestyle.

Ed resides in Beverly Hills, CA with his wife, Pam. A dog lover at heart, Ed's home is also filled with an array of some "precious mixtures" as well. Ed has five children: Claudia, Linda, Jeff, Katherine Mary, and Lex. His niece Amanda has also graced his life and home since her mother's passing. He also had a son, Michael who died of cancer in 1995. And he has six wonderful grandchildren.