

A Famous Actress – And a Martin County Connection

We have all heard of, and perhaps even known, someone famous. So, what does famous really mean? It might refer to being well known as an athlete, a politician, an author, or an entertainer.

Gail Garber was an accomplished singer, dancer, and actress born in Manhattan; however, she had a distinct connection to Martin County. As an accomplished comedienne, she began her career in acting at the young age of three or four in the play “Lilac Time” starring Gary Cooper. She later moved to California and worked with “Our Gang.” During her lengthy career, she teamed with Jackie Gleason, Burt Lahr, Clark Gable, Robert Young, Debbie Reynolds, Lucille Ball, Dick Van Patten, Dan Daley and many other notable entertainers of that era in show business. She also appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show and the NBC Theater.

Perhaps her most noteworthy accomplishment in show business was her humorous lead role in the play “Burlesque” during the 1940s. The play ran for five years, including three on Broadway. “Burlesque” featured Bert Lahr, perhaps best known for being the cowardly lion in “The Wizard of Oz,” with Garber’s comedic role being the wife of Bozo played by Billy Barry. In addition to being in movies and the theater she also took part in entertaining the troops during World War II.

Miss Garber was frequently mentioned in a number of New York entertainment and gossip columns. Walter Winchell’s column once told of her having a red cross on her dressing room door instead of a star. This was emblematic of her being a registered nurse as well as an actress, and she periodically worked as a nurse at Metropolitan General Hospital in New York. Another of Winchell’s columns referred to Garber as a comedienne being a witty woman quite comical without a script and with a straight man being a welcome satirist. She was also mentioned in Louella Parsons column regarding her then upcoming marriage to Lieutenant John Crawford.

An interesting incident regarding Miss Garber took place while she was in Boston. While attempting to sleep late in a Boston hotel one morning, she was continually annoyed by someone playing a violin in an adjoining room. She telephoned the room and asked the person who answered the phone to either “learn how to play the fiddle or throw it out.” She soon heard a knock on her door and the individual responsible for playing the violin apologized profusely for disturbing her. Ironically, the “fiddle” player was none other Jascha Heifetz, the world renowned violinist.

Gail Garber's birth name was Jacqueline Briggs. Her Martin County connection was a result of frequent visits to her grandmother, who happened to live in Fairmont. She was so fond of this area that she eventually chose to retire here. She passed away in 2004.

For more information on this topic, or to become a member, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.

GALE GARBER

Recently Co-Starred
with BERT LAHR in
"BURLESQUE"

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GAIL GARBER
BOBBY BARRY



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