

Stan Burns Collection

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Writers Guild Foundation Archive

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Stan Burns Collection

Dates: 1951-1980

Collection Number: WGF-MS-075

Creator/Collector:

Extent: 10 Linear Feet

Repository: Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Los Angeles, California 90048

Abstract: The Stan Burns Collection contains television scripts accumulated throughout his career as a comedy writer.

Language of Material: English

Access

Available by appointment only.

Publication Rights

The responsibility to secure copyright and publication permission rests with the researcher.

Preferred Citation

Stan Burns Collection. Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Acquisition Information

Donated by Stan Burns, on 01/12/2002

Biography/Administrative History

Stan Burns was an Emmy-winning variety comedy writer best known as a writer for Steve Allen. Burns was born on September 4, 1923 in Brooklyn, New York. After graduating high school, he joined the Marines and served in the South Pacific during World War II. After the war, he returned to New York and embarked on a four decade long comedy writing career. His first TV series work was in 1950 on Broadway Open House. In 1953, Burns met and became the first writer for Steve Allen on his local late night talk show. The show went national in 1954 and eventually became known as The Tonight Show. Burns remained with Allen throughout his years as host of Tonight [The Tonight Show] and subsequent variety and talk shows. Burns would expand the writing team to include Herb Sargent and Bill Dana among others. Burns followed Allen to LA in 1959 and worked with him until the mid-1960s. He went on to write for other variety shows and sitcoms such as The Carol Burnett Show, The Mary Tyler Moore Hour, Get Smart, and The Smother Brothers. He created, along with writing partner Mike Marmer, a short-lived Saturday morning children's show Lancelot Link: Secret Chimp which filmed real chimpanzees and dubbed the footage over with human voices. Stan Burns garnered one WGA Award nomination for the Steve Allen Show as well as four Emmy nominations and one win for work with Steve Allen, Carol Burnett and Flip Wilson. Burns died of heart failure on November 5, 2002. He is survived by his wife Shirley, his daughters, Laurie and Bonnie, son-in-law, Martin Green; and grandchildren, Adam, Josh and Megan.

Scope and Content of Collection

The Stan Burns Collection is organized into three series. Series I: Television Scripts, 1951-1980 is comprised of produced television scripts reflecting all of Burns' career. Shows represented include The Big Show, The Carol Burnett Show, Dean Martin Celebrity Roasts, Lancelot Link Secret Chimp, The Mary Tyler Moore Hour, The Mac Davis Show, Kraft Music Hall, Get Smart, Milton Berle Show, The Smothers Brothers, The Flip Wilson Show, The Steve Allen Show and Tonight with Steve Allen. The majority of these scripts are digitized from the originals. Series II: Film Scripts, 1931-1980 is comprised of Burn's produced and unproduced scripts for feature films as well as features written by other writers. Series III: Professional Papers contains ephemera from throughout Burn's career. There are dozens of undated sketches written for Steve Allen during the 1950s and 1960s as well as numerous submission packets from hopeful writers looking for work at the Steve Allen Show. Also included are audience question cards, many with typed joke answers, created for the Steve Allen Show, c.1962-1964 and used in a recurring segment. The collection also contains a few sketches by Woody Allen. And finally, there are a few outlines and ephemera from the TV series Lancelot Link: Secret Chimp.

Indexing Terms

Teleplays

Television writers
