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New Betty White Stamps Deliver Smiles

They are ready to add a little sparkle on mailpieces everywhere!

LOS ANGELES — The U.S. Postal Service today celebrated beloved entertainer Betty White’s mischievous wit, saucy persona and tireless advocacy for animals with a new stamp at a first-day-of-issue ceremony at the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens.

White’s spritely smirk will smarten up the day for any recipient of First-Class Mail bearing the new Forever stamp.

“Betty White was an American treasure,” said Amber McReynolds, chairwoman of the USPS Board of Governors. “With this stamp, we honor and remember the beloved “First Lady of Television” and the enduring mark she left on our American culture.”

Also at the event was Dale Stephanos, the artist who worked on the stamp. He described how the tiniest detail in his design came to him at breakfast.

“I was absent mindedly drawing instead of eating my eggs and looking back down at the mess I had been making in my sketchbook, I saw that at some point, I had drawn a paw print,” said Stephanos. “I had a bit of a eureka moment and thought, what if I just give Betty an earring that’s in the shape of a paw print?”

Other ceremony participants included Richard Lichtenstein, who co-chaired the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association’s board of trustees with White; Ellis Hall, a jazz musician known as “The Ambassador of Soul” and friend of White; and Danny Romero, a meteorologist at KABC-TV 7 Eyewitness News who acted as

emcee.

Background

Betty Marion White was born in Oak Park, IL, on Jan. 17, 1922, the only child of parents she came to regard as her best friends. The family moved to Southern California in 1923. A menagerie of pet cats and dogs and annual family trips to California's High Sierra gave an early start to her lifelong love of animals. Young Betty idolized early movie musical stars and developed an interest in acting, sometimes writing plays to perform at school. She also pursued operatic voice training.

Many fans who came to know White as a feisty, endearing representative of an older generation are unaware that she first acted on radio in 1930, and that her first television appearance was in 1939.

Wearing her high school graduation dress, a teenaged White sang and danced highlights from the operetta "The Merry Widow" in an experimental broadcast seen only by a small audience on an early television set located five floors below the studio.

She was also very patriotic, pausing show business pursuits during World War II to serve in the American Women's Voluntary Services, driving a truck to deliver supplies to gunnery encampments in the Hollywood Hills.

In the late 1940s, White landed more radio roles, she her first big break on screen came in 1949 with "Hollywood on Television," a pioneering local Los Angeles program. The live improvisational show ran for five and a half hours a day, six days per week. White sang and worked live ads into banter with her co-stars. White later said the intense immersion of running multiple aspects of these broadcasts was like going to "television college." She was awarded a Los Angeles Emmy Award in 1952 for her on-air work.

White went on to become the sole host and producer of "Hollywood On Television," and it became known as "The Betty White Show" — the first of a handful of shows to bear her name. She also played the title role in the 1952-1955 situation comedy "Life With Elizabeth" which featured vignettes about a newlywed couple. White was not only the star; she also co-created and produced the show — becoming one of the first women to produce a nationally broadcast sitcom.

White's tireless work ethic, prolific output and impish charm got her noticed. The NBC television network launched a half-hour version of her show in 1954. In 1957, she starred in another sitcom, "Date With the Angels", which was shortly replaced by another sketch-comedy show bearing her name.

Her love of games — word games in particular — also made her a popular game show panelist. And it was in 1961, during a stint as a celebrity contestant on "Password," that her comic skills struck personal gold. White and the show's host, Allen Ludden, met and were mutually charmed. White married the widowed father of three in 1963. In 1971, the couple produced "The Pet Set," a syndicated show of celebrity guests and their pets, along with featurettes of White interacting with wild animals. A lifelong relationship began between the Los Angeles Zoo and White, with the actress serving as advocate, donor and trustee.

White and Ludden often attended Friday night filming of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," whose star was a close friend. During the hit show's fourth season, writers created an episode with a character described as a "Betty White type" — all sweetness and light. After a failed initial talent search, producers finally cast White herself as a saccharine TV homemaker whose man-hungry and vicious streaks revealed themselves only off-camera. Her delicious portrayal was a hit, and White joined one of television's most acclaimed ensemble casts. A playfully risqué aspect also became part of White's public persona, adding another dimension to the perpetual twinkle in her eye.

After another self-titled sitcom starring White lasted only 14 episodes, she continued to make guest appearances, including "Mama's Family;" "The Love Boat;" daytime and primetime dramas; and various talk and game shows. In 1983, she became the first woman to win a Daytime Emmy as outstanding game show host for her work on "Just Men!"

In 1985, White received an offer to play another world-wise female character named Blanche on "The Golden Girls." In an inspired moment, however, the director suggested a role-swap: White performed the

part of Rose — sweetly naive and apt to launch into rambling tales of her preposterous hometown, the fictional St. Olaf, MN.

“The Golden Girls” was a massive seven-season hit and groundbreaking in the depiction of the lives of older women. White also played Rose in a sequel, “The Golden Palace,” which ran only one season.

White’s career was largely as a TV actress and personality, but her star power also made it to the big screen. She portrayed a U.S. senator in the political drama “Advise and Consent” (1962), and later films included the comedy-horror “Lake Placid” (1999) and the romantic comedy “The Proposal” (2009). She also lent her voice to animated features, including the English-language version of the Japanese film “Ponyo” (2009), and “Toy Story 4” (2019), when she voiced the role of a toothy toy tiger Bitey White, who was named in her honor.

As she approached 90, White’s career took another turn. She appeared in a Super Bowl commercial in 2010 and a petition campaign that year brought her back to live television; amid much fanfare, White became the oldest-ever guest host of NBC’s “Saturday Night Live.” The appearance landed White her fifth and final national Primetime Emmy Award.

Following the “Saturday Night Live” appearance, White was approached to play a role in the pilot episode of “Hot in Cleveland.” She enjoyed the script and castmates so much that she signed on for the series — despite her initial concerns about the grueling schedule of a weekly sitcom — playing Elka Ostrovsky for all six seasons. During that run, she also hosted “Betty White’s Off Their Rockers,” a prank show, which ran for three seasons.

In addition to her Emmys, White was presented with three Screen Actors Guild Awards, a Grammy Award, a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and induction into the Television Hall of Fame, among many other honors. She was also much recognized for her animal welfare work.

White died peacefully in her sleep on Dec. 31, 2021, just 17 days shy of her 100th birthday.

Stamp Artwork

Sold in a pane of 20, the Betty White stamp features a portrait of the cherished star against a violet-colored background and, in a lighter shade, bubbly spots that befit her sparkling personality. She is portrayed wearing a polka-dotted blue top, and, symbolizing her love of animals, an earring shaped like a pawprint peeks out of her blonde curls. “Betty White,” is printed in white near the bottom of the stamp artwork, while “FOREVER USA” is printed just below, in violet. Her name also appears centered atop the white selvage, also in violet.

The stamp illustration was created digitally and is based on a photograph taken by Kwaku Alston in 2010. Art director Greg Breeding designed the stamp with original art by Dale Stephanos.

News of the stamp is being shared with the hashtag **#BettyWhiteStamp**.

Postal Products

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