

The Per Niente

Per Niente Club

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I Ottobre due mila cinque

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Lou Costello was born Louis Francis Cristillo on March 6, 1906 in Paterson, N.J. Wanting to try his luck in Hollywood, Lou found sparse work as a laborer and an extra at MGM in 1927. He appeared in the boxing sequence of Laurel & Hardy's "Battle of the Century" (1927) and in the Delores Del Rio 1928 epic "Trails of 98."

By the time Lou worked his way back to the east coast, Bud Abbott was already a successful straight man in burlesque. Although Lou had his designs on becoming a dramatic actor, he worked as a Dutch comic in St. Joseph, Missouri at \$16.00 a week in order to make his way back to N.J. Once home, he continued pursuing burlesque jobs and for awhile worked as a dancing juvenile in Ann Corio's "This Is Burlesque." It was in this show that he met his future wife, Anne Battler and whom he married in 1934.

Although one can find many stories that claim to document the teaming up of Abbott & Costello, the most familiar is that of Lou's straight man getting sick and Lou asking Bud, also on the bill, if he would step in. Subsequently, history was made that night at a Brooklyn burlesque house in 1936 and the team of Abbott & Costello was born.

The first couple of years of their partnership were rather lean ones, but the turning point came when Ted Collins, manager for Kate Smith, asked if they would appear on the "Kate Smith Radio Show." They signed as summer replacements and proved to be a great success. Following, they signed to appear in Mike Todd's Broadway show, "Streets of Paris" and which also featured another newcomer, Carmen Miranda. Returning to radio, it was their performance of a new routine they had written in collaboration with their comedy writer, John Grant, that catapulted them to Hollywood and to stardom. Today, WHO'S ON FIRST has become their classic signature skit and most well-remembered of the Abbott & Costello routines.

In 1956, one year before the release of their last film, "Dance With Me Henry," and the dissolving of their partnership, Bud and Lou were brought together on "Steve Allen Show" before a live audience and nationwide broadcast. The emotion was heightened when unbeknownst to both man, Steve Allen announced the induction of Abbott & Costello's Gold Record in Cooperstown, N.Y. Today, Bud and Lou are still the first non-baseball playing celebrities to have such a work inducted.

Lou Costello passed away in March of 1959, followed by Bud Abbott in 1974. Today, their comedy continues to generate a whole new legion of fans from around the world. When "Abbott & Costello Meets Jerry Seinfeld" aired on NBC in 1994, Seinfeld contributed this thought. "If it weren't for Bud Abbott & Lou Costello, many of the vaudeville and burlesque routines would have been lost forever. It was through Abbott & Costello's films and television show appearances, as well as on radio, that will forever preserve them for generations to come."

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