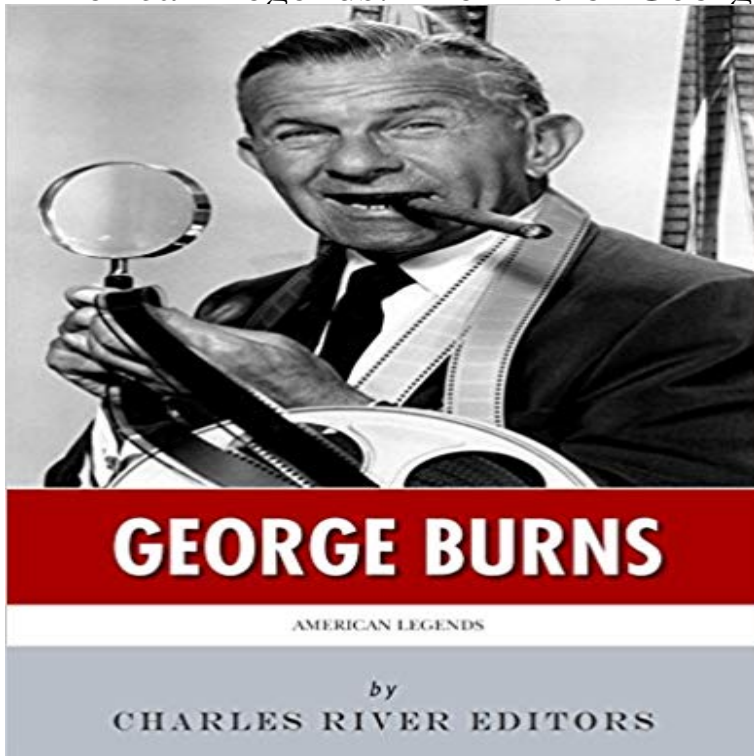


American Legends: The Life of George Burns



*Includes pictures *Includes Burns own quotes about his life and career *Includes a bibliography for further reading *Includes a table of contents You cant help getting older, but you dont have to get old. George Burns Im very pleased to be here. Lets face it, at my age Im very pleased to be anywhere. George Burns A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of historys most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors American Legends series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of Americas most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

Vaudeville comedy was one of the most important forms of entertainment in the history of the United States, though its hegemony faded during the early 20th century with the advent of radio, cinema, television, and finally social media. Still, in the years leading up to the development of the film industry in the last years of the 19th century, vaudeville was the leading form of mass entertainment, with a public comprised of a more working-class clientele than the traditionally bourgeois institutions of theater or opera. Moreover, the importance of vaudeville makes evident why the life and career of George Burns are significant. Not only was Burns one of the great vaudeville entertainers of the first few decades of the 20th century, he carried its legacy forward through his later work in radio, television, and film. Many Americans remember Burns today as the funny comedian who lived (and worked) for an incredibly long time, but Burns prolific career, which lasted almost the last 75 years of the 20th century, not only demonstrates the enduring influence of vaudeville on radio, television, and cinema but also evidences important ideological developments, particularly related to ethnicity and gender. Where vaudeville

historically relegated women to subordinate positions or excluded them altogether, George Burns professional relationship with Gracie Allen represented a marked turn away from such retrograde gender politics, especially since it was Allen who proved to be the most popular of the duo. With regard to ethnicity, Burns was able to deftly do justice to the Jewish legacy that defined vaudeville, while also, as Lawrence Epstein has noted, managing to assimilate his Jewish humor with a Gentile audience. With his omnipresent cigar, Burns may have looked like a throwback to a traditional epoch, but he was an important progressive figure in the representation of Jewish-Americans and women in popular American entertainment.

Although its his career longevity that is mostly celebrated now, Burns family background and career were inextricably intertwined, as his childhood was cut short in order for him to forge his career. Indeed, he turned to a career of comedy as a means through which to cope with great tragedy, but even after beginning his career, it would take more than two decades before he was truly able to succeed in the industry. Its also noteworthy that Burns had an uncanny ability to adapt to changes in entertainment, including the development of radio, films, and television. Throughout it all, Burns remained a master of consistency who sustained a career longer than many people live, an accomplishment he managed through subtly altering his performance style so that he could adapt to different media and the evolving tastes of the American public. As such, any biography of George Burns must explain not only what made George Burns famous but also how he managed to stay so famous and become one of the most recognizable comics of the century. American Legends: The Life of George Burns looks at the life and career of one of Americas most beloved comedians. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about George Burns like never before, in no time at all.

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