



Ed Sullivan

September 28, 1901 - October 13, 1974

New York, New York

Ed Sullivan, the newspaper columnist who became the most influential showman in early American television, died at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York on October 13, 1974, weeks after he was diagnosed with advanced esophageal cancer. He was seventy-three.

Edward Vincent Sullivan was born in Harlem on September 28, 1901, the son of Peter Arthur Sullivan, a customs house employee, and Elizabeth Smith Sullivan. His twin brother, Daniel, died at the age of two. The family lived in a small red brick house at 53 Washington Street in Port Chester, New York, where Ed earned twelve athletic letters in high school and captained the baseball team as its catcher. He later said that facing integrated teams in Connecticut left him with an instinctive rejection of any idea that a Black opponent was unworthy or inferior.

He started at The Port Chester Daily Item and worked his way through a string of New York papers as a sports reporter. In 1929 he became the Broadway columnist of the New York Evening Graphic, then moved to the Daily News, where his column "Little Old New York" continued throughout his television career.

His CBS variety hour premiered in 1948 as Toast of the Town and was renamed The Ed Sullivan Show in 1955. It ran until 1971, a record for a variety program in American broadcasting. Opera singers, ballet companies, comedians and rock bands shared the same stage on Sunday nights, and Sullivan asked most musical acts to perform live. He signed Elvis Presley for three appearances in 1956 but missed the first, on September 9, while recovering from a near-fatal car accident; the actor Charles Laughton hosted in his place. The Beatles' first appearance, on February 9, 1964, was the most-watched program in television history up to that time.

CBS canceled the show in March 1971. His wife, Sylvia, who had also been his financial adviser, died in March 1973. About two thousand people attended his funeral at St. Patrick's Cathedral on a cold, rainy day, and he was interred in a crypt at Ferncliff Cemetery in Hartsdale, New York. He has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and was inducted into the Television Academy Hall of Fame in 1985.

Services

Died in New York, NY, October 13, 1974, aged 73. Portrait: Photograph by Maurice Carnes LaClaire, 1955 (Library of Congress; public domain), hosted by Notice Nearby.

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