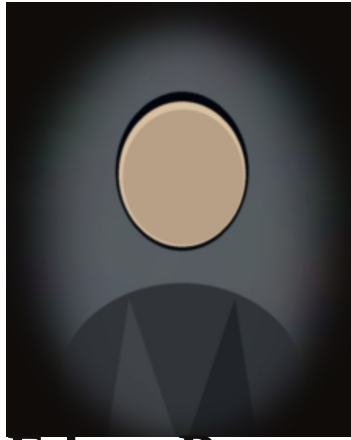




Edgar Bergen

February 16, 1903 - September 30, 1978

Paradise, Nevada

Edgar John Bergen - American ventriloquist, comedian, and radio star who made a monocled wooden partner more famous than many flesh-and-blood celebrities - died in Paradise, Nevada, on September 30, 1978. He was seventy-five. Born February 16, 1903, in Chicago as Edgar Berggren, he taught himself the craft, took Charlie McCarthy on the vaudeville road, and then somehow conquered radio - a medium where no one could see his lips move, and everyone still believed.

Charlie's top hat and Mortimer Snerd's rural drawl turned Bergen into a household name through *The Chase and Sanborn Hour* and decades of guest turns. He won a special Academy Award for creating Charlie, acted in films, and later watched his daughter Candice become a star of her own. Near the end he announced retirement, donated Charlie to the Smithsonian, and opened a farewell engagement in Las Vegas - a last bow for a man who had spent a lifetime letting a dummy get the better lines.

Kidney disease ended the run three days into that farewell. He died having proved that partnership, even wooden, can be an American art form.

Chicago taught hustle; radio taught economy of gesture. He performed as if wit required two voices and one perfectly still mouth.

He died in Paradise on September 30, 1978. Somewhere a top-hatted figure is still waiting for the next perfectly timed insult.

Bergen's gift was comic partnership - making silence and speech share a stage. Notice Nearby keeps the death date so September 30 remembers the Chicago ventriloquist who taught America to listen to wood and believe it.

Services

Died in Paradise, Nevada, September 30, 1978. Ventriloquist and radio entertainer; Charlie McCarthy; Mortimer Snerd; special Academy Award.

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