



Louis Nye

May 1, 1913 - October 9, 2005

Los Angeles, California

Louis Nye, the comic actor whose cheerful greeting of Hi-ho, Steverino became one of television's first catchphrases, died of lung cancer at his home in Los Angeles on October 9, 2005. He was ninety-two.

He was born Louis Neistat in Hartford, Connecticut, on May 1, 1913, the son of immigrants from Russia. As a young man he acted in local theater and worked in radio, landing a steady stream of character parts in New York radio drama in the 1930s and 1940s. He was a gifted mimic who could handle dialects, pompous blowhards and nervous little men with equal ease. After serving in the Army during the Second World War, he returned to radio and moved into the new medium of television.

His great break came on The Steve Allen Show in the late 1950s. In the recurring Man on the Street sketches, Allen interviewed a rotating cast of oddballs, and Nye played Gordon Hathaway, a smug, ascot-wearing Madison Avenue type who greeted the host with a breezy wave and his signature line. Alongside Don Knotts, Tom Poston and Bill Dana, Nye helped make the segment a highlight of the program and a training ground for a generation of television comedy.

He worked steadily for the next half century. He played Sonny Drysdale, the banker's foolish stepson, on The Beverly Hillbillies, appeared in films including The Facts of Life and The Stripper, and turned up as a guest on dozens of series. Late in life he found new fans as Jeff Garlin's father on Curb Your Enthusiasm.

He also performed in nightclubs and on stage and recorded comedy albums. He was married for more than six decades to Anita Leonard, a songwriter, and they had a son. Friends remembered him as warm, quick and endlessly game for one more bit.

Services

Died in Los Angeles, California, October 9, 2005, of lung cancer, aged 92. Comic actor best remembered from The Steve Allen Show's 'Man on the Street' sketches. Portrait: 1966 publicity photograph (public domain), hosted by Notice Nearby.

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