



Red Skelton

July 18, 1913 - September 17, 1997

Rancho Mirage, California

Red Skelton - Richard Bernard Skelton - American comedian whose clown characters and weekly television variety show made mid-century living rooms a circus without cruelty, died in Rancho Mirage, California, on September 17, 1997. He was eighty-four. Born July 18, 1913, in Vincennes, Indiana, he worked burlesque, vaudeville, radio, and film before The Red Skelton Show became a network institution - Freddie the Freeloader, Clem Kadiddlehopper, and a closing "Good night, and may God bless" that millions treated as family ritual.

Two Hollywood Walk of Fame stars (radio and television) mark the breadth. He painted clowns as seriously as he played them, and he kept a performer's discipline long after ratings wars moved on. Colleagues remembered generosity and an old-school insistence that comedy could be broad without being mean; audiences remembered the pantomime and the soft landing at the end of each hour.

When network comedy hardened into sharper satire, Skelton's gentler clowning looked antique to some and restorative to others. He kept performing and painting into old age, a reminder that vaudeville skills could outlive any single medium that hired them. Studio executives who once scheduled him like clockwork later learned that affection for his characters outlasted many flashier formats.

He died in Rancho Mirage on September 17, 1997. Reruns and clips still teach younger comics that character work can outlast fashion.

Skelton's gift was affectionate absurdity - faces and voices that made strangers feel like neighbors. Notice Nearby keeps the death date so September 17 remembers the Indiana clown who owned Tuesday nights for a

generation.

Services

Died in Rancho Mirage, California, September 17, 1997. Comedian and host of The Red Skelton Show; Hollywood Walk of Fame stars for radio and television.

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