

NOW WE'RE TALKIN

By Helen Marketti

My Three Sons

An interview with Barry Livingston who played Ernie Douglas on My Three Sons.

Barry Livingston has quite an impressive Hollywood resume that stretches before and after his time on *My Three Sons*. His first role was at the age of four, alongside Paul Newman, in the film, *Rally Around the Flag Boys*. He starred in several TV shows including *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *The Lucy Show* with Lucille Ball, and *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*. His signature horn-rimmed glasses made him an endearing character who had charm and executed great punch lines.

My Three Sons aired from 1960 to 1972. Barry joined the cast in 1964. At first, he was the kid next door but he was eventually adopted by the Douglas family.

"I have been fortunate to work with great stars from a young age," said Barry. "As I got older, I became even more attuned to movies and film. That's when I started noticing the work of Steve McQueen, Dustin Hoffman, and Jack Nicholson."

"My mom got my brother Stan and I interested in theatre at a young age. (*Ed. Stanley Livingston played Chip Douglas on My Three Sons*). Both of us started getting bookings. My mom had a knack for having us show up at the right time. Word started getting around that I was a good character actor. Working with Fred MacMurray, who played our dad, Steven Douglas, was great. This was at a time when it was difficult, nor even heard of, for a movie actor to join a TV show. It was a big thing in those days for something like that to happen. Fred was actually a quiet guy. He wasn't flashy or 'headline grabbing.' He was a family man and liked to be out of the spotlight as quickly as he could. He loved acting. But I don't think he was ever particularly fond of attending premiers or parties because he was a private guy."

Remembering William Frawley who played "Bub" (grandfather) on *My Three Sons*: "I think he will always be best known as Fred Mertz from the *I Love Lucy* show. By the time he joined

our cast, he was on the downside of his career. We filmed differently than *I Love Lucy*. Fred MacMurray had his role filmed for several episodes at once, and they were out of sequence, whereas Frawley was used to things being in order, so it was an adjustment. When he was unable to continue with the show because of health reasons, he was replaced by William Demarest, who played Uncle Charlie (Bub's brother). I thought William Frawley was a tough guy but still had a twinkle in his eye. Demarest was a crusty guy in temperament and had a harder shell. They were both similar in that they came from the same generation and were part of the Great Depression era. They both were long time character actors in Hollywood but each were loveable in their own way."

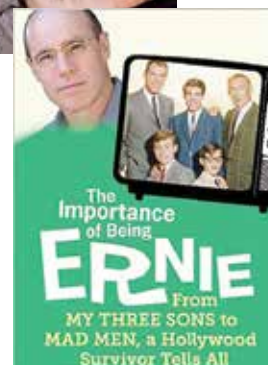
Eventually, *My Three Sons* ended its TV run in 1972. "My brother Stan and I went back to school. We finished out at North Hollywood High School. We were famous by then but it was good to connect with our peers and get back to some kind of normalcy," remembers Barry. "It didn't seem strange at all to be in a long running TV show with your real-life brother. We got along great and were friends."

Barry remembers Don Grady, who played older brother Robbie Douglas. Don passed away in 2012 from cancer. "Don was like a real-life older brother. Someone I looked up to, admired and learned from."

Barry definitely had a career in Holly-



Barry & Stan Livingston (Ernie & Chip)



wood with longevity. "I enjoy what I do. I have appeared in many movies and television shows. I am 65-years-old and I work to keep reinventing myself so I can still be part of what

works. At this stage, I continue to explore a new frontier. I think *My Three Sons* still fills a place in people's hearts. It was a family show where people could connect. It has universal appeal. I still get approached by fans to this day who watched the show. Now they are grandparents and it keeps growing. I think my character Ernie saw things differently. He cut to the chase in situations and he had the best lines."

Currently, Barry is working on a new version of *The Fugitive*. He has an autobiography available wherever books are sold titled, "The Importance of Being Ernie - From My Three Sons to Mad Men, A Hollywood Survivor Tells All." (Citadel Publishing).



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