



Wednesday, 20 June 2012

Minerva Pious

If anyone remembers Fred Allen any more, it's for the Allen's Alley portion of his radio programme, where four characters would joke up issues of the day. Fans can name the characters—Mrs. Nussbaum (Minerva Pious), Senator Claghorn (Kenny Delmar), Titus Moody (Parker Fennelly) and Ajax Cassidy (Peter Donald). They made such an impact that people have forgotten they weren't the original residents of the Alley in 1942 and only spent two years together. The actors who played the last three characters were relative newcomers to the Allen show.

Pious, however, was with Allen in the earliest days, and she actually gets an on-air credit on the debut of *The Hour of Smiles* on March 21, 1934, which was the brainchild of the ad agency of Allen's sponsor at the time. The other regulars were Irwin Delmore, Lionel Stander, Jack Smart and Eileen Douglas, though Walter Tetley whenever Allen needed a child voice. Pious was doing her Nussbaum Jewish dialect even back then and was well respected for the variety of accents she could master.

The *Lowell Sun* of August 16, 1934, carried a short biography about her, something unusual for a stock player on a radio show.

How Minerva Became a Star

"How," repeated tiny Minerva Pious, reaching up to pull a thread of the reporter's cuff, "did I become a radio character actress?"

"Yes," said the reporter, walking down the stairs six steps so he could be on a level with her eyes. "And how did you learn all those dialects?"

"Well, booblitchka, I'll tell you," Minerva said. "Ich war in Moscow geboren et quand j'ai dix ans je quitto La Russie et viens aux Etats Unis, et, signore questa patria..."

And out of it all, the reporter, who was something of a linguist himself, gathered an unusual story.... not the least unusual part of which was the fact that Miss Pious, who is a character actress on Fred Allen's Wednesday evening Town Hall Tonight program, probably owes her successful position in radio today to the fact that she forgot in the middle of a performance and was fired.

The performance was not acting, however. It was playing the piano for a radio singer. Miss Pious, who always prided herself upon her ability to remember notes, would, under no circumstances, have the music before her at the piano. In the middle of a performance one night her memory failed her. She was fired.

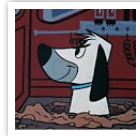
This ended her work as accompanist and started her on a career as a character actress. The singer who fired her—Harry Taylor—is none other than Harry Tugend, Fred Allen's assistant and director of Town Hall Tonight, and when the Allen group was looking for a woman who could do Russian dialect, In January, 1933, Tugend remembered little Minerva Pious, who wasn't a perfect accompanist, but was a native Russian. She has been with the Allen group ever since, speaking all the European dialects, including the Scandinavian.

Miss Pious was born in Moscow, March 5, 1909. She had her first stage experience as a child walk-on in an opera in which her father sang the baritone lead. She went to school in Moscow, Vienna, Paris, and in various American places after her parents brought her to this country.

Before going into radio she played character bits on the New York stage and worked in the editorial



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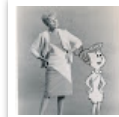


May 1940 - You couldn't blame David Sarnoff if he

mumbled some uncomplimentary comments at the F.C.C. in May of 1940. The Commission made two rulings, basically tell...

23 hours ago

Yowp



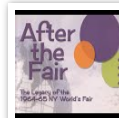
Wilma - Jean Vander Pyl didn't have a big name on

television when she was cast to play Wilma Flintstone in 1960. The others were a bit different. Bea Benaderet ap...

3 weeks ago

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Termite Terrace headlines



Today's Post: The 1964 World's Fair Documentary and other

64 World's Fair stuff - This documentary is quite good. Most of you have probably already seen it, but I'm sharing it here anyways. While I'm add it, why not share some ...

8 minutes ago

department of a large national and international news syndicate. She also played in German and French dramatics in Salzburg.

In person, she belies her rather powerful, husky voice. She is exactly five feet tall, and has brown eyes and dark hair. She likes bridge and tennis, and has published songs, poetry and prose. Believe it or not, Minerva Pious is really her name and she is really Russian.

The article engages in that fine show-biz tradition of shaving some years off someone's age. Pious spent her teenaged years in Bridgeport, Connecticut where she appeared in plays from 1919 into the early '20s. The picture of her in this post is from a Bridgeport newspaper 1920 and is certainly not of an 11 year old. U.S government record show she was born on March 5, 1903. Newspaper articles reveal her father, Abraham M. Pious, brought the family from Odessa, Russia to New Haven, Conn. in 1905, then moved to Bridgeport five years later (115 Roosevelt Street) where he operated the Park City Candy Manufacturing Company.

Oddly, while her hometown paper profiled her brother Billy (a prominent dentist), the only longer story it published on Pious—and it didn't even run her obit—was the piece on December 21, 1947. There was a picture accompanying it.



War Orphan Here for New Leg; Minerva Pious, His Benefactor

Cassino—a name that will live in American military history for years upon years.

Pious—the last name of a radio comedienne from Bridgeport who has kept America chuckling for years and years.

How these two names have become related is a story that makes Minerva Pious a truly person, was revealed in New York just last week.

Cassino was the place where Ernie Pyle wrote his most famous dispatch—the story of the company commander who died in the assault on the Jerries entrenched in a hilltop cemetery.

And Cassino was the setting for the story of the di Lillo family and their 11 year old son Guiseppe, who is now 12.

Family Wiped Out

In the Allies' advance of April, 1944, Guiseppe was the sole survivor of a large family. Dead were his father, his mother, eight brothers and one sister. And little "Joe" himself had lost his right leg—but lived.

His case is typical of the thousands of war orphans in Europe today, and compassionate Americans are doing something about it.

One of those is Minerva Pious, the ex-Bridgeporter who plays "Mrs. Nussbaum" on Fred Allen's NBC radio show.

Miss Pious joined other Americans in bringing to this country five war orphans—and Guiseppe is in New York now as her charge. He will remain here until Miss Pious can get him a new leg, and then he will return to Italy under funds supplied by the comedienne and administered through the Foster Parents' Plan for War Children, Inc., on Manhattan's 42nd street.

Guiseppe is a bright lad who gives the impression of being quite reserved and shy, but actually has made many friends in New York. He wants to earn his own living, and through the foster parents' plan he will be taught a trade. Before the shooting war came to Cassino, he roamed the hills tending sheep alone with other members of his family.

When he returns to Italy—after getting his new "natural action limb"—he will certainly have a warm spot in his heart for Minerva Pious and the other kindly Americans who are making a new life possible for him.

Just like Allen, Minerva Pious didn't really make the transition to television. She appeared on a show with Gertrude Berg (of "The Goldbergs") in 1948 and two decades later was part of the CBS soap "The Edge of Night." Other than that, she seems to have only showed up on interviews looking back at network radio.

Pious died in March 16, 1979 at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York.

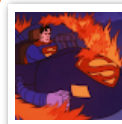
Posted by Yowp at 12:23



1 comment:

Dave Mackey 20 June 2012 at 17:33

Movies with Michael



The World's
Greatest
Super
Friends:
Lex Luthor
Strikes

Back (1979) - A wonderful episode. In this episode, Lex Luthor escapes from prison by switching places with Lois Lane. After escaping he captures each of the Supe...

1 hour ago

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CONAGUA's
cybersecurity
payments found
unverified

by ASF's 2002 audit. -

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fernandollera.com

3 hours ago

Pete Hale



My First
Carl Barks -
I decided to
become a
cartoonist
last year, so

I started reading some old "animal" comic strips and books for study and enjoyment. I've already tried out...

7 hours ago

News From ME

Today's Video Link - We haven't had any Tom Lehrer on this site in many years so let's rectify that. Here he is on one of David Frost's eighty zillion TV shows in Great Britain...

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Afternoon
at Niles:
Silent Era
Animation
and Jerry

Beck -

1 day ago

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audience
awaits! -
Many of us
saved a
tape or

acetate or two. There are a lot of people that would like to hear them again. The airchecks from AFN/AFKN/SCN etc usually t...

1 day ago



You mentioned Lionel Stander... fans of "Hart to Hart" may not realize he had a long career in radio, films, and even cartoons - he was in a number of late-1940's Walter Lantz cartoons as either a wolf or Buzz Buzzard.

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The Exposure Sheet



[A Taste of What's to Come](#) - Hey guys! I'll be out of town this

weekend, and due to this trip, I decided to push back my next planned post to Monday, so I have some more time to iron ...

2 days ago



Cartoon Research

[New York State of Mind: The 35th Anniversary of "Oliver & Company"](#) - An excellent "warm-up lap" for the artistic leaps and box-office blowouts on the horizon for Disney.

2 days ago

Mark Kausler's CatBlog

[Felix Vs. A Spy From Brigandia](#) - In these Felix strips from 4-24 to 5-7-32, Felix returns from the Moon, only to encounter a spy from the kingdom of Brigandia, who wants to steal all the p...

6 days ago

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