



Sunday, 2 January 2022

## Iris the Showgirl



It's quite a change from the Ziegfeld Follies to playing opposite That Darn Cat. But so went the career of Iris Adrian.

Iris played brassy dames in the movies. Jack Benny started using her on radio in the early '50s where she squawked insults at him from behind the counter of a drug store café. He put her in his stage one in a later incarnation of what started out as the Chicken Sisters act in the mid-'30s. She appeared with him on TV. She was funny.

Given her background, it's no surprise she was acquainted with hoods and gangsters. Feature stories were written about her in the '30s, but years later the *Charlotte News* interviewed her for a feature story that was split into two halves. I'm not sure when we'll get around to posting the second half, but here's the first from May 17, 1975. Her press

agent must have been busy as I've found a few stories about her from roughly the same time.

### Lucky Brought Her Chicken

By EMERY WISTER

News Staff Writer

**HOLLYWOOD** — The shapely young blonde with the innocent face of a child was reading a magazine in her living room when there came a knock on the door. There stood a man with a paper bag in his hand. "It was Charlie Luciano, you know, Charlie Lucky, the fellow who was supposed to be running all those rackets," recalled Iris Adrian, still pretty at 62. "Charlie Lucky liked my mother and I. He was always coming to our house on Sundays. He would bring us chickens and other things to eat, and he had a chicken in the bag this day."

THAT WAS IN the early 1930s and Miss Adrian, who began her dancing career in high school in her native Hollywood, was in the chorus of the Ziegfeld Follies in New York.

Since that time she's danced in other Broadway shows, appeared in a few score motion pictures, and worked in a theatrical show starring the late Jack Benny.

Always a familiar face but seldom a star, Iris Adrian is still working, her latest role being in the new Walt Disney movie "The Apple Dumpling Gang" to be released this summer.

"I started young," she said. "I went to Hollywood High School, and that's where they looked for dancers in those days. I won a perfect back contest when I was just 12 years old. I was a little too young to win a perfect front contest then."

"Women never worked in those days. My grandmother owned a lot of property in Hollywood. My grandfather even owned a town in Colorado he'd founded."

"BUT THEN CAME the 1929 stock market crash and the Great Depression, and times and fortunes changed. Iris Adrian Hostetter became the breadwinner in her family, and both her mother and grandmother looked to her for support."

At 18 she was dancing in the follies, the first woman in her family to have to work for a living.

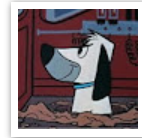
"Let me tell you the girls in the follies were very sweet and virginal and pure," she said. "We had to be that way."

"Charlie Lucky was very solicitous of us. If one of his men started paying too much attention to any of us, he'd tell the fellow he would have to quit seeing us."

"We thought he was in love with us, but then we learned he owned a string of bawdy houses and didn't want us as competition."

"He'd say 'girls I want all of you to stay straight. But in ease you don't, I have a job for you.'"

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IRIS ADRIAN danced in the follies a few years then went on to another top-rated show called "Hot-Cha-Cha." Meanwhile, Billy Minsky, the king of burlesque, was eyeing her figure. One night he came backstage to see her. "How about coming with my show?" Minsky asked her. "I'll pay double what Ziegfeld is paying you." "For what?" she asked.

"For stripping," said Minsky. "That's what."

"I didn't know," she recalled. "I couldn't decide if I wanted to do that. So I went to Ziegfeld and asked what he thought about it. He said, 'I'd rather you'd work for Ziegfeld.'"

"So I never worked for Minsky. I never worked in burlesque. Now I sort of wish I had. I would have made a great stripteaser and made a fortune. But I was always a little above about it."

SO IRIS ADRIAN went on to the movies to play sweet young things and flappers. This was in the days when movies were still being made on Long Island near New York City.

"The last stage show ended at 4 am then I would get a short nap and go out to the studios. I didn't even bathe. I had to sleep some time so I just played dirty."

FLORENZ ZIEGFELD paid her \$150 a week and that was a lot of money in those days. She picked up an extra \$200 a week in the movies. Finally she was summoned to Hollywood for a grand salary of \$750 a week.

"I finally got up to \$1500 a week for the few movies I was starred in," she recalled. "I worked with people like George Raft, Bob Hope and Betty Grable. "She was the first star I knew who didn't have bandy legs or was cross-eyed. A lot of top movie people had things wrong with them.

"George Raft said he wanted me in one of his movies and took me to the Paramount Studio. Right away they said they wanted me for the lead, but Raft didn't like that. He wanted Carole Lombard and she got the job.

"I knew Jean Harlow, too. People were saying such had things about her and how could they be true? She was so tired all the time, she wouldn't have had time to do all the bad things people were saying she did.

IRIS ADRIAN was with Bob Hope in "Paleface" and "My Favorite Spy." She worked with Milton Berle in "Always Leave 'Em Laughing." She was with Elvis Presley in "Blue Hawaii" and went back into history for Cecil B. De Mille's story of Jean Lafitte "The Buccaneer."

More recently she played a role in the film version of "The Odd Couple" and also was in the Disney Studio's "That Darn Cat"

She'd always had a tendency to gain weight and in her early screen days went on diet pills. Eventually she became ill.

"I got thin too fast and got malnutrition. I decided to go back to the New York stage. Let's see, what the hell was the show? Oh yes, I remember now. It was Milton Berle's revue."

My understanding of the situation is showgirls tend to attract men and marriage proposals. Iris did. She talks about them in part two.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at 07:31



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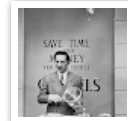


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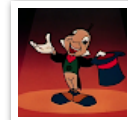


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