

Wednesday, 17 December 2025

## Piousness in the Alley

Allen's Alley is what comes to mind when Fred Allen's radio show is discussed. But the programme evolved over the years and the Alley was a comparatively late addition.

Allen had many regulars over the years, but through almost all of it was Minerva Pious. She was there at the start of the Alley and was there at the end as John Brown, Alan Reed and Charlie Cantor moved on to other shows.

Pious is known to radio fans as Mrs. Nussbaum (during her brief absence after Allen returned to radio, Cantor played Mr. Nussbaum and Elsie Mae Gordon was the female denizen of the Alley) but she performed an array of characters for Allen, including snooty society ladies and hillbillies.



Just as Allen had problems as he half-heartedly tried to adjust to television, Pious concentrated more on stage work after the death of prime-time network radio. Here's an unbylined story from the *Toledo Blade* of April 19, 1959.

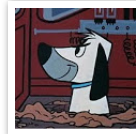
### What Ever Became of ...

MRS. NUSSBAUM—one of the sidesplitting comic characters on the late Fred Allen's Sunday night radio show? Listeners eagerly anticipated the inevitable point in the program when she opened her door, said "Nu!", then proceeded to outjoke Allen himself. In real life, Mrs. Nussbaum was a skilled dialectician named Minerva Pious, who learned different accents working at a department store in one of New York City's "melting pot" neighborhoods. She was with Allen from 1933 to 1952. Today, Minerva Pious lives in Manhattan, writes photo stories for syndication overseas. She has been out of radio and TV since the end of 1958, when she ended a series of character portrayals on the Robert Q. Lewis show. Minerva thinks comedy on radio and TV "has gone backwards. I don't find any bubbling clowns in comedy. I find it static."



What did Pious think of Allen? She had some remembrances for a syndicated columnist promoting a rare special on NBC radio. This is from October 25, 1965.

## About Me

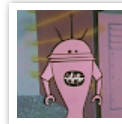


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## NOTE

We'll have daily posts to Dec. 29 but this blog is retired. COMMENTS ON OLD POSTS WON'T BE APPROVED.

## My Blog List



[Hocus Pocus Focus/Muni -Mula Mix-Up - Don Messick](#)

had an odd voice that I first heard on \*The Herculoids\*. I don't know exactly how he did it; probably by wiggling his tongue inside his mouth.

...

1 week ago



[TV Comes to New Mexico - Television exploded in 1948.](#)

At the start of the year, there were 18 TV stations in the U.S. At the end, \*Television\* magazine reported 52 were on the air...

3 weeks ago

## Blogs to See



[Today's Hanukkah Video - Here's a group called Six13 with...well, just watch it. It's really good... \[...\] Read More... from Today's Hanukkah Video](#)

7 hours ago

## NBC Will Salute Late Fred Allen

By PHYLLIS BATTELLE

*Distributed By King Features Syndicate*

NEW YORK — Fred Allen — the golden-hearted grouch, the writer – comedian with bellhop eyes ("they carry up to four bags") — died on an icy New York street nearly 10 years ago.

Comedy has not been the same since. There is sick comedy now and satirical wit. But no one dares to sneer and growl, cleverly and brilliantly, at the hierarchy as Allen did; a man who was infinitely smarter than most of his confreres, he could sink verbal pins into the stuffed shirts of the men he worked for, businessmen and vice presidents, and make millions of Americans laugh.

"He was the model man," said novelist Herman Wouk reverently. Wouk had worked as a script writer for Allen. "He was the greatest satirical wit in America. All any of us on staff did was to try to imitate him, but he was the best writer in the lot."

How did he "get by" with biting the hands that fed him — with announcing to a nationwide audience, for example, that "within the hierarchy of the little men there is no man who can outlittle the executive in a large corporation who treats his authority as he treats a tight suit; in a tight suit he is afraid to make a move"?

### HAD NEAT TRICK

"Well, he had a neat trick," says Miss Minerva Pious, who became famous as "Mrs. Nussbaum" and a variety of other personalities on Allen's long-enduring radio show. "He abhorred censorship and, since he couldn't defeat the censorship department, he simply outwitted it. In every script he, would put in four really wild, outrageous jokes that couldn't possibly get by. He did this so that when the censors would get to the fifth joke the one he really wanted to keep — it would seem so lame they left it in." Miss Pious, who stands a neat five feet and is still laden with gracious charm, is one of several long-time associates of Fred's who will comment on the late, great comedian next month (Nov. 14) when NBC-Radio presents an hour-long "Salute to Fred Allen."

The show will revolve around tapes from Allen's radio shows which for 17 years were among the highest-rated in the medium. The only disappointment, for his fans, is that such a show could not be presented on television—which could certainly use an hour of intellectual, sardonic wit.

### ALLEN HATED TV

"But I guess that wouldn't be a good idea," says Miss Pious. "The chief hated TV, as we all know, and I can't blame him. He went to battle on censorship there, but he couldn't beat it."

He once said of TV — "It's not worth it. People get 10 per cent of everything except my blinding headaches."

Minerva Pious remembers him as an infinitely kind man whose growly exterior frightened the great even more than the small. "There never was such a boss. I never realized how he impressed other people, however, until Charles Laughton came on the show as a guest.

"He arrived at the studio 45 minutes before air time and he was shaking. He asked me, 'Where can I get a drink?' I knew Laughton wasn't that kind of man, so I took him down the street, and he drank down two straight shots fast. Then he said, 'How do you know when you're doing all right with Fred?'"

### SHOW A SUCCESS

Miss Pious laughs. "Of course, the show went beautifully, but I don't think Allen congratulated Laughton afterward. That wasn't his way. His way was to give everybody, whether it was a big, star or a little codger, respect.

"He never opened his mouth to direct an actor unless the actor had misread a line for the fourth time. This was a great rarity. I could name you the great comedians — but I'd better not, because many are still alive — who had to tell an actor how to handle every line.

"I didn't care that Fred didn't smile and pat me on the back. He showed his respect and appreciation by leaving everybody alone. Once you knew him, you could never feel insecure with that man."

Fred Allen's generosity is legendary. He was never without a large roll of bills, which he would peel off at the first sight of a panhandler.

### REGULAR PANHANDLER

"There was one old codger who used to come to Fred's hotel room at 4 p.m. every Sunday, while the chief was in his writing conferences. He did it for years, always wanting a handout.

"One Sunday Fred got furious. He said, 'You bum—you never even try to get a job ' But he gave him the money anyway. On a later Sunday, during the writers' conference, Fred began pacing the floor, glaring



The Allen Art company—Left to right, Minerva Pious, Lionel Standor, Eileen Douglas, Jack Smart, John Brown and Walter Tetley, provides able support for Comedian Fred Allen in the Town Hall broadcasts.

### Movies with Michael



How Disney Brought Santa to Life: Santa's Workshop

& The Night Before Christmas - West of Neverland -

8 hours ago

### Fernando Llera Cartoons



The odd task of stalking sharks and attaching GPS

trackers on them. - ©2025 fernandollercartoons.com

22 hours ago

### Tom and Jerry: Toon by Toon



The Year of the Mouse (1965) - Note: This review contains

spoilers. \*The Year of the Mouse "was a remake of a short film that Chuck Jones had made for Warner Brothers, \*Mouse Wrec...

1 day ago

### Noah Pasternak



2025 Reading - Part I - \*The Beatles, Lennon & Me\* By

Pete Shotton and Nicholas Schaffner 1983 By this point, I think I've read nearly every book on the Beatles that contains ...

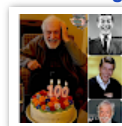
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### Cartoon Research

The 60th Anniversary of "A Charlie Brown Christmas" - Executives at the network felt that the pace was too slow, the music didn't work, and the animation was too simple. Ironically, these are aspects that hav...

2 days ago

### Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



Happy 100th Birthday, Dick Van Dyke! -

1 week ago

at the writers and at ' his watch. Finally he said. 'That SOB—he hasn't shown up yet.'  
When Allen died, so suddenly of a heart attack, something wonderful went out of the laugh business. He will return, briefly, on Nov. 19. If you listen, don't stifle your laughs. Remember the words of the master: "My friends, a stifled laugh does not die when you push it back in your throat. It lives in your lower colon to laugh at the food as it passes through .."

Pious died March 16, 1979, almost a month before Peter Donald, who was Ajax Cassidy, the man next door in the Alley.

Posted by Yowp at 07:30

Labels: Fred Allen

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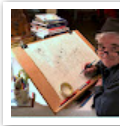
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**AFRTS Archive**



**Bill Stewart 1967 - Rudy Vallee.** Rudy was the biggest of the big in the 1920s and kept going for five decades. It's a fun listen. \*Bill S...  
2 weeks ago

**The Exposure Sheet**



**Tony Benedict: A Tribute - The animation community**  
lost one of its great veterans this Saturday. This weekend, we were shocked and saddened to learn that Tony Benedict, one of the gre...  
2 weeks ago

**Mark Kausler's CatBlog**  
**Happy Thanksgiving from Jimmie Acorn - JH** Happy Thanksgiving to my readers! Here's a couple of Jimmie Acorn stories from Children's Activities magazine in 1954. The February story I call "Jimmie...  
3 weeks ago

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Why Not Read...

- [Cartoonerific Podcast](#)
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- [Tex Avery at Warner Bros](#)
- [Format Films Roadrunners](#)
- [Likely Looney, Mostly Merrie](#)

Blog Archive

- ▼ [2025](#) (230)
  - ▼ [December](#) (23)
    - [Cartoons on TV, Christmas 1965](#)
    - [To Get to the Other Side?](#)
    - [What'd He Say?](#)
    - [Piousness in the Alley](#)
    - [Of Dog and Jowls](#)
    - [Newfoundland?](#)
    - [Rob Reiner](#)
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[He Didn't Shrink At  
Playing a Shrink](#)

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Gags](#)

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A Manner of Speaking](#)

[What? Worry About  
Television?](#)

[Paul Frees](#)

[Wabbit Switch](#)

[Woims](#)

[Battle of the Comedy  
Sexes](#)

[Ape Mouth](#)

[Asian Avery](#)

► [November](#) (28)

► [October](#) (1)

► [September](#) (8)

► [August](#) (1)

► [June](#) (12)

► [May](#) (34)

► [April](#) (30)

► [March](#) (33)

► [February](#) (28)

► [January](#) (32)

► [2024](#) (209)

► [2023](#) (381)

► [2022](#) (382)

► [2021](#) (380)

► [2020](#) (389)

► [2019](#) (376)

► [2018](#) (379)

► [2017](#) (380)

► [2016](#) (396)

► [2015](#) (389)

► [2014](#) (390)

► [2013](#) (388)

► [2012](#) (397)

► [2011](#) (106)

## Labels

[Aline Mosby](#) (20)

[Art Davis](#) (55)

[Bad Luck Blackie](#) (12)

[Binko](#) (2)

[Bob and Ray](#) (19)

[Bob Clampett](#) (130)

[Bob McKimson](#) (91)

[Bob Thomas](#) (67)

[Christmas cartoon](#) (89)

[Chuck Jones](#) (202)

[Columbia](#) (86)

[Counterfeit Cat](#) (10)

[Cynthia Lowry](#) (41)

[Dick Thomas](#) (18)

[Don Patterson](#) (25)

[Drag-a-Long Droopy](#) (14)

[Earl Wilson](#) (23)

[Erskine Johnson](#) (47)

[Felix the Cat](#) (43)

[Film Daily](#) (50)

[Fleischer](#) (233)

[Frank Tashlin](#) (45)

[Fred Allen](#) (65)

[Fred Brunish](#) (15)

[Friz Freleng](#) (219)

[Gene Deitch](#) (25)

[George Pal](#) (12)

[Grant Simmons](#) (12)

[Groucho](#) (15)

[Hanna and Barbera unit](#) (148)

[Hanna-Barbera](#) (19)

[Hans Conried](#) (6)

[Hardaway-Dalton unit](#) (7)

[Harman-Ising](#) (116)

[Henry Morgan](#) (15)

[Irv Spence](#) (15)

[Jack Benny](#) (689)

[Jay Ward](#) (41)

[Jim Tyer](#) (15)

[Jimmy Durante](#) (22)

[John Crosby](#) (119)

[John Sutherland](#) (50)

[Johnny Johnsen](#) (45)

[Johnny Olson](#) (6)

[June Foray](#) (10)

[Kenny Baker](#) (6)

[King-Size Canary](#) (11)

[Laugh-In](#) (22)

[Legend of Rockabye Point](#) (7)

[Little Rural Riding Hood](#) (9)

[Magical Maestro](#) (11)

[Maurice Noble](#) (12)

[Mel-O-Toons](#) (5)

[MGM](#) (818)

[Mike Lah](#) (9)

[Norm McCabe](#) (13)

-----  
[Pat Matthews](#) (14)  
-----  
[Paul Julian](#) (17)  
-----  
[Preston Blair](#) (3)  
-----  
[Robert Q. Lewis](#) (4)  
-----  
[Sara Berner](#) (6)  
-----  
[Screwy Squirrel](#) (44)  
-----  
[Snafu](#) (38)  
-----  
[Soupy Sales](#) (2)  
-----  
[Spider-Man](#) (3)  
-----  
[Terrytoons](#) (131)  
-----  
[Tex Avery](#) (724)  
-----  
[The Cat That Hated People](#)  
(13)  
-----  
[Toby the Pup](#) (6)  
-----  
[Tom and Jerry Human](#) (49)  
-----  
[Tralfaz Sunday Theatre](#) (31)  
-----  
[Ub Iwerks](#) (136)  
-----  
[UPA](#) (87)  
-----  
[Van Beuren](#) (158)  
-----  
[Vernon Scott](#) (55)  
-----  
[Virginia MacPherson](#) (14)  
-----  
[Walt Disney](#) (226)  
-----  
[Walter Lantz](#) (356)  
-----  
[Warner Bros.](#) (996)  
-----  
[Who Killed Who](#) (13)

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