



George Bookasta

July 14, 1917 - March 28, 2014

GEORGE BOOKASTA – LAST OF THE GOLDEN ERA OF HOLLYWOOD– PASSES AWAY AT 96

George Bookasta passed away last week in Saratoga Springs, New York at 96. He was a child movie star in the Golden Era of Hollywood, a big band leader, World War II veteran, entertainer, director, producer, avid horseman, loving father, grandfather and friend to many.

George was born on July 14, 1917 in Kansas City, Missouri. At the age of 3, George - with a mustache, bowler and Charlie Chaplin outfit was seen by a talent scout on the Vaudeville stage and signed by Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and Charlie Chaplin for United Artists. The family then moved to Hollywood. George was cast in a dozen child star roles - opposite Pickford, Reginald Denny and numerous other leading stars of the day. Amongst his most memorable roles - George played opposite Lupe Velez, as "Spotty", in Henry King's "Hell's Harbor", one of the earliest feature films with sound. He also played in the Thief of Baghdad, Little Annie Rooney, Coquette, Rosita and Night Bird.

George went to Hollywood High School and was an unbeaten track star, playing football and baseball as well. He started his own orchestra after high school in the 1930s and was soon headlining Hollywood's Cafe de Paris, live on national radio.

By the early 1940s, George was working both in front and behind the camera. He worked closely with Paramount Studios, where he learned all aspects of film making, and soon was directing film, theater documentaries and commercials.

George joined the United States Army in 1943 and was sent to the European front. He was a Sergeant and Army radio operator who saw active service during World War II in Germany and France where he was injured in battle. George formed an orchestra in the army, was a leader of men on the battlefield and escaped death many times.

After the war, seeing an opening in the new TV industry, George developed the nation's first weekly TV magazine, TV TIME which he published for several years. He then headed to New York to direct the variety series "Colgate Comedy Hour". After the show, George directed commercials for Ford, Borden Dairy and Beech-Nut baby foods into the 1960s and 1970s. Although largely retired from public life in the 1980s and 1990s, George filled his free time with his family, love of sports and horses. George returned to show business

in 2001, writing and directing „Dear Femininity“ , a musical which opened in New York. George lived between Los Angeles and Manhattan before becoming a permanent resident in Saratoga Springs in 2004 to pursue his love of horses. George was a horse owner and active part of the thoroughbred industry and Saratoga community. He held lectures and often gave talks about the Golden Era of Hollywood he grew up in - A time of more genuine glamour and sincere lyrical poetry and romance. George worked with some of the biggest names in show business over an entertainment career spanning decades. George had friends everywhere he went and the respect of all who knew him. He could regularly be seen at the horse racing track and enjoying the restaurants and shops of Main Street in Saratoga Springs, bringing smiles to people's faces. He was kind, funny and charming with endless stories drawn from his colorful and rich background and takes on life. He could make anyone feel better with just the right words to say or just the right gesture. He was a positive thinker who believed in the power of the mind and lived his entire life to the fullest with drive, determination and desire. He was the real thing. Firm but gracious, a special man, gentleman and entertainer to the end.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at St. Clements Church 231 Lake Ave. Saratoga Springs, NY at 10:00 am on Friday April 4, 2014. Burial will be at Gerald BH Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery, 200 Duell Rd., Saratoga, NY at 12:00 pm on Friday April 4, 2014. Flowers and Cards can be sent to the Tunison Funeral Home, 105 Lake Ave. Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. Online remembrances at www.tunisonfuneralhome.com

Previous Events

Mass of Christian Burial

APR 4. 10:00 AM (ET)

St. Clements Church
231 Lake Ave
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Burial

APR 4. 12:00 PM (ET)

Gerald B.H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery
200 Duell Rd
Saratoga

Tribute Wall

MR

“ I enjoyed seeing George at the Saratoga Flat track and the Saratoga Raceway. He was always a gentleman. I will miss seeing his smiling face. May you find comfort in fond memories.

Mary E. Riegert

Mutuel Clerk

Mary E. Riegert - April 06, 2014 at 09:35 AM

BF

“ From your California family, many relations & friends:

"Out of sight but never out our minds & hearts"

<http://storage.lifetributes.com/Candles/new/candle-9.png>



Bookastas Family - April 04, 2014 at 02:58 AM

NS

“ R.I.P. Georgie.

nancy smith - April 02, 2014 at 08:31 AM