

The Schmooze **Stories with a Yiddish Twist**

A YIDDISH GUIDE TO JACK CARTER

by
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Syosset, New York

Comic, Jack Carter, passed away. His manic storytelling made him a comedy star in television's infancy and helped sustain a show business career through eight decades. A spokesman, Jeff Sanderson, said the cause was respiratory failure.

Although he fell short of the top tier of entertainers, he had countless appearances on talk shows and on comedy series.

“nomen” (name)

Jack Carter's original surname was Chakrin.

“tate-mame” (parents)

Carter's parents, Jewish immigrants from Russia, owned a candy store. He was born in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn.

“zukhn” (to search)

“People spend their lives searching for their one true love, their other half. I found mine in college, dancing in a fraternity house driveway. Lucky for me, she found me right back.” (quote)

“khasene” (marriage)

Carter was married three times: To Joan Mann, to Paula Stewart (the

ex-wife of Burt Bacharach), and to Roxanne Stone. The latter were married in 1971, divorced in 1977, and remarried in 1992. He leaves behind his wife, Roxanne, two sons, Michael and Chase, and grandchildren, Jake and Ava.

“milkhome” (war)

Carter was drafted during W. W. II, when he toured with the cast of Irving Berlin’s show, “This is the Army.”

“zikh” (himself)

Carter starred with Elvis Presley in the 1964 film, “Viva Las Vegas.” He played himself; The Horizontal Lieutenant, The Extraordinary Seaman,” and “The Funny Farm.”

California

Carter lived in California since 1970. He says, “The produce stores are like Cartier’s. The tomatoes are real gems.”

“tumbler” (noisemaker)

A list of Borscht-Belt tumblers who made it to the big time includes Danny Kaye, Jan Pierce, Jan Murray, Tony Curtis, Jerry Lewis, Red Buttons, Phil Silvers, Moss Hart, Jack Albertson, Joey Adams, Phil Foster, and JACK CARTER.

A “tumbler” wakes up the Jews when they fall asleep around the pool after lunch. He goes by and excites them and tells them jokes and stories. “ponim” (face) Instead of them drifting off, he keeps them happy and alert and that’s his job.

Note: Mel Brooks, for example, was a pool tumbler. He used to do an act where he wore a derby and an alpaca coat! He would carry two rock-laden cardboard suitcases and go to the edge of the diving board and say, “Business is no good!” and he jumps off. The suitcases would take him to the bottom. His derby would float on the surface. The blonde lifeguard would have mercy, dive down, and save him. (Note: The Yiddish word for suitcase is “tshemodan.”)

Most tumblers lived for the tips at the end of the guest’s stay.

Carter told his jokes employing at least a dozen different facial and physical contortions, such as “The Fadeaway,” “The Slow Burn,” “The Turn-Around,” and “The Walking Freeze” (“frirn”).

“bafaln” (to attack)

Carter remained the attacker, poking fun at members of the audience, disparaging politicians and celebrities.

“naves” (news)

On “The Jack Carter Show, which was broadcast from Chicago, Carter poked fun at the day’s news. From there, the show moved on to music and comedy skits. He was, indeed, a “komiker” (comedian).

“zaftik” (pleasantly plump)

Carter sometimes told abrasive jokes. Ex. A man sees a fat lady carrying a duck. The guy says, ‘What are you doing with that pig?’ The fat lady snorts, “That’s not a pig; it’s a duck.” The guy says, “I’m not talking to you. I’m talking to the duck.”

“vakatsye” (vacation)

“If you like to spend your vacation in out-of-the-way places where few people go, let your wife read the map.” (quote)

“gastgeber” (host)

Carter hosted his own show, “Cavalcade of Stars” from 1949-53) and appeared regularly on “All-Star Review” from 1951-53. He was the host of a game show pilot called, “Second Guessers.” The plot did not sell.

“ershter” (first)

[speaking of Milton Berle] “Milton Berle adored me. I’ll never forget the first time I met him. I walked into Lindy’s [the New York restaurant], and Milton ran up to me, he took me aside...And he left me there.” (quote)

“Zait azoy gut, ruft a doktor.” (Please call a doctor.)

Carter appeared on the 1960s medical drama, “Dr. Kildare.” He garnered two Emmy nominations.

“fertsik” (40)

Carter was on “The Ed Sullivan Show” more than 40 times.

“shtark” (strong)

“shtarker charakter” (strong character)

“Maybe I come on too strong. Directors and producers fear you when you come on strong. They’re afraid they may not be able to control you.”
(quote)

“golf” (golf)

Carter played golf with Jack Benny. FYI: According to David M. Bader, “Yiddish has no word for golf, but it has 273 different ways to complain about lower back pain.”

“pupik” (bellybutton)

“When you did Sullivan [Ed], you couldn’t say bellybutton.” (quote)

“shtern” (star)

In the late 1940s, Carter was a guest on Milton Berle’s TV series, “The Texaco Star Theater.”

“farbaytn” (to replace)

In “The King of Queens,” Carter played Arthur Spooner in the sitcom’s pilot but was later replaced by Jerry Stiller. Carter’s scenes were re-shot by Stiller.

“radyo” (radio)

Carter was on radio’s “Call Me Mister.” He did impressions of Fred Allen, Nat King Cole, Sidney Greenstreet, and other show business celebrities. On “Match Game, he did his Vito Carleone impression.

“birger-maystr” (mayor)

Carter appeared as its ill-fated Mayor in the 1980 cult horror film, “Alligator.” The storyline: A baby alligator, Ramon, is flushed down a Chicago toilet and survives by eating discarded laboratory rats with growth hormones. “Genug iz genug!” (Enough is enough.)

“teater” (theater)

Carter played opposite (“antkegn”) Sammy Davis Jr. in the 1956 musical, “Mr. Wonderful” (“vunderlekh”). He had previously replaced Phil Silvers in the B’way show, “Top Banana.”

“vits” (joke)

Typical Carter jokes: “Canada ran out of silicone and the girls up there are using hamburger helper.”

He’s at the airport (“fliplats”) and someone waved and shouted, “Hi,

Jack!”

[to a heckler]

“I couldn’t warm up to you if we were cremated together.”

“alt” (old)

[while touring in the comedy showcase, “Legends of the Catskills] he talked about Jewish mothers and dealing with old age: “I told her to act her age, so she died.” (quote)

“Er hot modneh drochim Er pravhet” (He has odd ways.)

My wife says, “You’re mister negative! Everything is bad! Everything won’t work! You won’t take a chance!” (quote)

“oylem” (audience)

“I work to win the audience. I see these other guys, and they just recite. The less you do, the less you offend, of course, and that’s what they want on TV. You can phone in your routine.” (quote)

“Gut gezogt” (Well said)

“I’m not a has-been! [and after precisely the proper pause he would elaborate], “I’m a never-was!”

“grunteygns” (real estate)

In later life, Carter spent much of his time working in real estate.

“zorgn zikh” (to worry)

Carter was an inveterate worrier. “A comedian doing a solo routine is selling himself,” he says. And if the audience (“oylem”) does not laugh, the performer feels a sense of personal rejection. That hurts, and that’s why clowns must be the saddest people on earth.”

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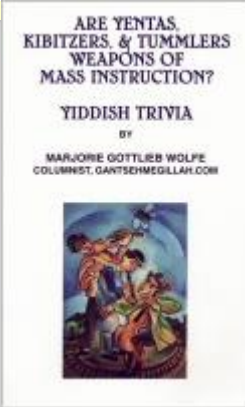
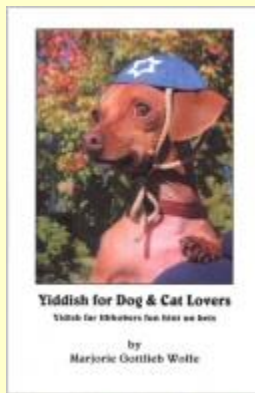
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Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of
two books:



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