



American Legends: The Life of Red Skelton

Charles River Editors

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*Includes Skelton's quotes about his life and career

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“I don't want to be called 'the greatest' or 'one of the greatest'; let other guys claim to be the best. I just want to be known as a clown because to me that's the height of my profession. It means you can do everything—singing, dance, and above all, make people laugh.” – Red Skelton

“All I want to do is to make people laugh, to take the word ‘heartache’ out of their vocabulary” – Red Skelton

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history's most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors' American Legends series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America's most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

Among radio personalities and television entertainers, almost nobody had a career as long or storied as Red Skelton, one of America's foremost comedians during the 20th century. Over the course of 70 years, Skelton made crowds laugh from vaudeville to performing as a clown, and while he is best known for The Red Skelton Show and his other variety shows, he also managed a 45 year stage career, as a pantomime or one of the other characters he created over the years.

Although Skelton was extremely popular in America at the peak of his career, his entertainment was also a throwback to the early 20th century, which compelled television studios to balk at the notion of continuing to air his shows by 1970, even though his shows had spent almost two straight decades with Top 10 ratings on the air. Understandably bitter, Skelton refused to have his shows in syndication until the 1980s, and by then, the same concerns about his appeal to younger crowds had only gotten worse as he and his show had aged.

Skelton is still best remembered for his performances and his television career, but he was also a noted artist who fittingly excelled at depicting clowns on canvas. Despite the seemingly silly content of his work, Skelton's skills as an artist were so impressive that he made millions of dollars a year selling his art and having it displayed. By the time he died in 1997, it's estimated that he may have made more money through art than through performing.

American Legends: The Life of Red Skelton chronicles the life and career of one of America's most beloved comedians. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Red Skelton like never before, in no time at all.

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