

Marie Wilson

Marie Wilson was born Kathrine Elizabeth Wilson on August 19, 1916, in Anaheim, California. Her father died a year later and the family moved to Hollywood. While attending Hollywood Cumnock School for Girls, Wilson was signed to a contract with Warner Brothers at the age of 15 and began appearing uncredited in motion pictures. Her first credit in a full-length film was 1935's *Stars Over Broadway*. Wilson was a working actress for many years, earning roles in multiple films every year.

In 1946 Wilson was cast as the ditzy, even downright dumb, Irma Peterson in one of CBS' new series, *My Friend Irma*. At first Wilson turned down the role, telling writer-producer Cy Howard that he would not like the way she would perform it. However, Howard persisted, Wilson accepted, and the rest is history.

The show received a lot of industry hype as it went on the market in 1946 looking for a sponsor; Lever Brother ultimately signed on, looking to replace the much higher cost *Joan Davis Show* in their sponsorship portfolio.

My Friend Irma debuted on April 11, 1947 and aired until 1955, with Marie Wilson in the lead role. Other supporting actors included Cathy Lewis, Joan Banks, John Brown, and Hans Conreid. The program consistently landed in the Hooper and Neilson top-15 ratings. In fact, the show was so popular it spun off into film, television, comic books, a comic strip, and even a stage play. By 1951, Marie Wilson was voted one of the five most popular radio performers in the country.

The character of Irma Peterson came to define Marie Wilson's career and she appeared in just a handful of films after landing the part. Wilson's last film was released in 1962 but she worked in television until 1972. She is credited with roles in at least 56 movies and 7 television programs over a nearly thirty year career. For her talent and hard work Wilson's acting career is represented by three stars on Hollywood's Walk of Fame – one each for radio, film, and television.

Marie Wilson was married to actor Allan Nixon in the 1940's, and to TV producer Robert Fallon in 1951 until her death from cancer on November 23, 1972 in Hollywood, California. She was 56.

Information for this biography was taken from *Broadcasting*, *The New York Times Archives*, *Variety*, The Internet Movie Database, and Wikipedia.