

Tom Collins  
Kurt Schrieffer

Tom Collins was born Beryl Williams Collins on June 7, 1913 in Chicago, Illinois. After graduating from Austin High School in 1930, he enrolled at the University of Illinois. He stayed for only one year, leaving to join the Goodman Theater in Chicago where he learned his craft along with other young Chicagoans such as Karl Malden. He was signed to a contract with MGM and appeared in small roles in a dozen or so titles between 1939 and 1940, including the part of Dr. Joiner in several installments of the *Dr. Kildare* film series.

In the early 1940s Collins made a complete transition to radio performing and during the first part of the decade played supporting roles on many of the most popular serial dramas of the time: *Aunt Mary*, *The Gallant Heart*, and *Dear John*. His work can also be found amongst several of the anthology series such as *Stars Over Hollywood* and *Theatre of Famous Radio Players*.

Beginning in 1945, Tom enjoyed five years of prominence as a true star of the medium. In that year he took over the recurring role of Nick Lacey on *One Man's Family*, and from the popularity he gained for that performance he was able to land the lead roles, in quick succession, on *Chandu the Magician* (1948-50) and *The Adventures of Frank Race* (1949-50) while also appearing as sidekick Reggie York on Carlton E. Morse's program *I Love Adventure*.

In 1950 the search for greater opportunity turned Collins' career abruptly in the opposite direction. At about the same time, the home of Chandu moved from Hollywood to New York City (with its runtime expanded from 15 to 30 minutes) and a television launch of *One Man's Family*, with scripts to be penned by Morse, was planned to commence in Manhattan as well. Collins moved his family to the suburb of Rye in expectations of being busier than ever and expanding into the hot new medium. But the preparations for the television show went awry and the program never aired; meanwhile the Chandu program was less successful in the revised format and listeners fell away. Within a short time Collins was reduced to a smattering of radio parts and after a role on *The Romance of Helen Trent* in 1957 he was effectively through as an entertainer.

During the 1960s, Tom fed his family by assuming brief stints as a railroad ticket agent, a florist's assistant, a piano salesman, a Good Humor truck driver and a security guard, a sad culmination of a successful life in the public eye. Tom Collins passed away on June 17, 1973 at the age of 60.

Sources:

Largely drawn from "Tom Collins" web biography posted by "Seamus" of the Cobalt Club, including numerous direct quotations.

Also:

*On the Air*, John Dunning  
Internet Movie Database (IMDB)