

PARLEY BAER BIO

Born in Salt Lake City, Utah, Baer had a circus background, but began his radio career at Utah station KSL. With a fairly high pitched voice often accompanied by a Western twang, he became one of the busiest radio performers in the late 1940s and 1950s.

His first network show was *The Whistler* which was soon followed by appearances on *Escape* (notably narrating "Wild Jack Rhett" and as the title patriot in an adaptation of Stephen Vincent Benet's "A Tooth for Paul Revere"), *Suspense*, *Tales of the Texas Rangers* (as various local sheriffs), *Dragnet*, *The CBS Radio Workshop*, *Lux Radio Theater*, *The Six Shooter*, and more.

In 1952, he began playing Chester, the unofficial deputy to Marshal Matt Dillon on *Gunsmoke*, eventually ad-libbing the character's full name, "'Chester Wesley Proudfoot'". (The character's name was changed to "'Chester Goode'" in the television series, which featured an entirely different cast.) Baer's portrayal of Chester was generally considered his finest and most memorable role and, as he often said, the one he found most fulfilling. Baer worked on several other Norman MacDonnell-produced radio shows, including the situation comedy *The Harold Peary Show* (aka *Honest Harold*) as Pete the Marshal, *Rogers of the Gazette* (loosely based on the early life of Will Rogers) as Doc Clemens, *Fort Laramie*, and *The Adventures of Philip Marlowe*.

As a charter member of CBS Radio's dramatic stock company, Baer played character roles on other CBS shows, including recurring appearances on *Yours Truly*, *Johnny Dollar*. Other recurring roles included Eb the farm hand on *Granby's Green Acres* (the radio predecessor to television's *Green Acres*), Gramps on *The Truitts*, and Rene the manservant on the radio version of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. His later radio work included playing Reginald Duffield and Uncle Joe Finneman on the *Focus on the Family* series *Adventures in Odyssey* in the 1980s and 1990s. He also made a guest appearance as a cooking contest judge on *Three's Company* in the early 1980s.

As an on-camera performer, he was recognizable by both his voice and his balding, paunchy appearance, often as fussy or obstinate officials or neighbors. Television roles included obnoxious Mayor Stoner on *The Andy Griffith Show*, neighbor Darby on *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, frequent guest appearances on *The Addams Family* as insurance man Arthur J. Henson, and in later years, Miles Dugan on *The Young and the Restless* in the late 1990s. Film roles included parts in several live action Disney features, including *Follow Me, Boys!* (again as a mayor), *The Ugly Dachshund*, and *Those Calloways*. He also appeared in *Two on a Guillotine* and *Dave* (as the Senate majority leader).

He also voiced Ernie Keebler in the cookie commercials before suffering a stroke in 1997 which affected both speech and movement. He recovered sufficiently to make a handful of appearances at old-time radio conventions and a guest appearance on *Star Trek: Voyager* before finally passing away from related

complications in 2002, at the age of 88.