

Alan Reed
Ryan Ellett

Herbert Theodore Bergman was born August 20, 1907. He would become more well-known under the moniker Teddy Bergman but became a legend as Alan Reed. A native of New York City, Reed studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts before attending Columbia's University where he majored in Journalism. He later claimed his first show business job was with Oklahoma City's Ralph A. Rose Stock Company.

In the 1920s Reed gained show business experience on the vaudeville circuit; It was during this time that he adopted the Teddy Bergman name, the name he predominantly used on radio through the 1930s. Reed pegged his radio debut as 1926 over WOR but his earliest documented radio show was *True Detective Stories* in 1928 on which he played Joe de Mug. Other early series included the 1929 CBS show *The Henry-George Program*, and 1930's *Arabesque*. On *The Henry and George Show* Reed, recognized as a dialect specialist, played George while Henry was played by Herbert Polesie, both portraying a pair of "transcontinental travelers."

Subsequent early 1930s series featuring Reed were *Joe Palooka* (ca. 1932), *The Van Heusen Program* (ca. 1934), *The Chase & Sanborn Hour* with Eddie Cantor (ca. 1934), and *Harv and Esther* (ca. 1935). His most fondly remembered work from this era is undoubtedly the character of Falstaff Openshaw who was a staple of Allen's Alley on Fred Allen's show under various titles. Reed's ad-libbing talent was legendary and an apocryphal story relates that while sharing the microphone with Jack Pearl, Reed cracked Pearl up so much that he lost his place in the script. Reed was subsequently dumped from Pearl's show as a result.

Interestingly, producers discovered early that Reed's vocal skills were adaptable to many radio mediums from the comedy of the Fred Allen and Rudy Vallee shows to such dramas as *Great Plays* and many episodes of *The Shadow*. During the second half of Reed's radio career his roles ran the gamut of the medium's offerings from sitcoms like *The Life of Riley*, *Duffy's Tavern*, and *Life with Luigi* to whodunnits like *Ellery Queen*, private eye shows such as *Let George Do It* and *The Adventures of Sam Spade*, mysteries and supernatural fare including *Suspense*, *Escape*, and *The Whistler*, to straight drama including *The Railroad Hour*, *The Family Theatre*, and *Lux Radio Theatre*.

Reed appeared in a number of motion pictures from the 1940s to the 1960s, most notably *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946) and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961). But television is where Reed's legacy primarily rests. He appeared and starred in dozens of series from the late 1940s into the 1970s and the apex of his career might be considered his years voicing Fred Flintstone on the 1960s prime-time cartoon *The Flintstones* and the early 1970s spin-off *The Pebbles and Bamm-Bamm Show*.

In 1932 Reed married Finette Walker, a Broadway performer, and they raised three sons. A heavy smoker, Alan Reed died of a heart attack on June 14, 1977 after battling emphysema for some time.

This information comes from *What's on the Air?*, *Radio Digest*, *Broadcasting*, *Variety*, *The New York Times*, *RadioGoldIndex.com*, and *The Internet Movie Database*,