

## Rudy Vallee

Rudy Vallee was born Hubert Prior Vallee on July 28, 1901 in Island Pond, Vermont, to Charles Alphonse and Catherine Lynch Vallee. His parents were both born in Vermont, but were children of immigrants. He played drums in his high school band, but also played clarinet and saxophone. His idol was saxophonist Rudy Wiedoft, and would play Rudy's records so often that he soon earned the nickname Rudy from his University of Maine peers. He had the opportunity to meet his idol, and the two Rudys developed a friendship that lasted until Wiedoft died.

He ran away from home to enlist in the Navy in 1917 to help with the World War I efforts, but was discharged 41 days later when Naval authorities discovered he was only 15. He moved to London in 1924 and joined a band at the Savoy Hotel, where he contemplated becoming a vocalist, but was discouraged from doing this by his fellow bandmates. He returned to the United States in 1925 to attend Yale University, where he formed a band. It was with this band that he realized his ambition of becoming a vocalist when he was afraid of losing an engagement at a New York club. He developed his crooning style from using a megaphone to amplify his voice, and is considered by many a pioneer for this soft, natural style of singing. In 1928, WABC began broadcasting his performances from the Heigh Ho Club in New York City. It was also in 1928 on May 11 that he married Leonie Cauchois McCoy. Their marriage lasted only three months.

Also in 1928, "The Fleischmann Hour", radio's first talk show, debuted with 200 million listeners nationwide with Rudy as host. It was a live variety show, and Rudy invited the famous and not-so-famous. He was also the first to invite black musicians to his show, and they in turn would invite him to perform with them in Harlem nightclubs.

In 1929 he made his first film, "The Vagabond Lover", made to cash in on his singing popularity. At first his acting was stiff, but experience gained him a reputation as a comedic supporting player. He made television appearances in "Batman" as Lord Marmaduke Fogg, and in Rod Serling's "Night Gallery" as a vindictive surgeon. He also appeared on Broadway in "How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying", and reprised the role in the film version.

In addition to his brief marriage to Leonie Cauchois McCoy, he also had brief marriages to actress Jane Greer and Fay Webb. He married Eleanor Norris in 1946, which lasted until his death in 1986.