

Johnny Carson

A Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress

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Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

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Collection Summary

Title: Papers of Johnny Carson

Span Dates: 1970-1992

ID No.: MSS83848

Creator: Carson, Johnny, 1925-

Extent: 47,600 items; 136 containers; 54.4 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Television personality. Correspondence, scripts, reports, and production files of the "Tonight Show" starring Johnny Carson broadcast on the NBC television network documenting Carson's affiliation with the program from October 1972 through May 1992.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Names:

Carson, Johnny, 1925-

Bishop, Joey

Brenner, David, 1945-

Brown, Helen Gurley

Carlin, George

Charo

Crystal, Billy

Ho, Don

Hope, Bob, 1903-

Leno, Jay

Letterman, David

Lewis, Jerry, 1926-

Newhart, Bob

Price, Vincent, 1911-

Reilly, Charles Nelson

Rivers, Joan

Stevenson, McLean

National Broadcasting Company, inc.

Subjects:

Television programs--Production and direction

Occupation:

Television personalities

Administrative Information

Provenance:

The papers of Johnny Carson, comedian, entertainer, and television talk show host, were given to the Library of Congress by the Carson Productions Group in December 1995.

Copyright Status:

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Johnny Carson is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Preferred Citation:

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Johnny Carson Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1925, Oct. 23	Born, Corning, Iowa
1942-1945	Served in the U.S. Navy aboard the <i>Pennsylvania</i> in the Pacific
1948	Married Jody Wolcott (divorced 1963) Wrote radio scripts for radio station KFAB, Lincoln, Nebr.
1949	B.A., University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebr.
1949	Worked for radio station WOW and television station WOW-TV, Omaha, Nebr.
1951	Station announcer, KNXT-TV, Los Angeles, Calif.
1951-1952	Star, Sunday afternoon comedy show, KNXT-TV, Los Angeles, Calif.
1952-1954	Writer, Red Skelton television show on CBS Television Network, Los Angeles, Calif.
1954	Starred in "Johnny Carson Show," CBS Television Network, Los Angeles, Calif.
1956	Moved from California to New York, N.Y.
1957	Master of ceremonies, "Who Do You Trust," ABC Television Network, New York, N.Y.
1958	Guest host, "Tonight Show," substituting for Jack Paar
1960s	Night club performer, primarily in Las Vegas, Nev.
1962-1992	Host, "Tonight Show," NBC Television Network
1963	Married Joanne Copeland (divorced 1972)
1965	Published <i>Happiness Is...a Dry Martini</i> (New York: Doubleday. unpagged) Entertainer of the Year, Friars Club, New York, N.Y.
1967	Published <i>Misery Is...A Blind Date</i> (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday. unpagged)
1969	Negotiated contract with Hart, Schaffner & Marx to model a line of "Johnny Carson" clothing
1972	Married Joanna Holland Host, Emmy Awards ceremony, New York, N.Y. "Tonight Show" moved from New York, N.Y., to Hollywood, Calif.
1992, May 29	Final telecast of the "Tonight Show" with Carson as host

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John William "Johnny" Carson (1925-) consist of reports, scripts, correspondence, and production files of the ["Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson"](#) on the NBC Television Network. The papers comprise one series reflecting Carson's affiliation with the show for the period October 1970 to May 1992.

The Carson Papers document each night's show and the production material pertaining to guest interviews. Typed index cards contain introductory comments for use by Carson or a substitute host related to each guest. Linked to these cue cards are typed commentaries prepared by researchers from preliminary interviews with a guest outlining areas of interest to be discussed. Also with the file for each show is a listing of commercials, skits, guests, and network pauses in the sequence they occurred. A "Broadcast Standards Acceptability" report includes the names of guests, the host, sponsors, personalities and commercial products mentioned, and references which were censored and edited. The report expanded from an outline in the 1970s to a more comprehensive review during the 1980s, especially after 1988. Comments by Carson, though rare, are pencilled on the reverse of the show's cue cards. Files for shows aired January-June 1976 and January-April 1991 are missing. In 1971, Carson reduced his appearances from five to four nights a week and in the late 1970s to three or four nights a week plus extended vacation periods.

Comedy skits from the show are available in their entirety, often based on current political themes or topical personalities. Letters from the viewing public to Carson or his producers focus on remarks made by guests or the cast or on specific situations. A show receiving wide attention from the viewing audience aired on 4 December 1972 with guest Don Ho, a singer-entertainer from Hawaii. Other correspondence concerns requests for guest appearances and complaints from agents. A wide range of individuals appeared as guests. Stage, screen, and television personalities predominated, but journalists, singers, writers, sports figures, scientists, politicians, comedians, and other celebrities also appeared. Guests included Joey Bishop, Helen Gurley Brown, George Carlin, Charo, Billy Crystal, Bob Hope, Jay Leno, David Letterman, Vincent Price, Charles Nelson Reilly, and Joan Rivers. Guest hosts included Joey Bishop, David Brenner, Jay Leno, David Letterman, Jerry Lewis, Bob Newhart, Joan Rivers, and McLean Stevenson.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in one series:

- ["Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson," 1970-1992.](#)

Description of Series

Container

BOX 1-136

Series

"Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson," 1970-1992

Index cards, chronologies, outlines, scripts, broadcast standards reports, correspondence, and miscellaneous material related to the television show.

Arranged chronologically by the date the show was aired.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-136	"Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson," 1970-1992 Index cards, chronologies, outlines, scripts, broadcast standards reports, correspondence, and miscellaneous material related to the television show. Arranged chronologically by the date the show was aired.
BOX 1	17 Oct.-4 Dec. 1970 (8 folders)
BOX 2	7 Dec. 1970-22 Jan. 1971 (7 folders)
BOX 3	25 Jan.-12 Mar. 1971 (7 folders)
BOX 4	15 Mar.-30 Apr. 1971 (7 folders)
BOX 5	3 May-18 June 1971 (7 folders)
BOX 6	21 June-13 Aug. 1971 (8 folders)
BOX 7	16 Aug.-1 Oct. 1971 (7 folders)
BOX 8	4 Oct.-19. Nov. 1971 (7 folders)
BOX 9	22 Nov. 1971-14 Jan. 1972 (8 folders)
BOX 10	17 Jan.-21 Apr. 1972 (10 folders)
BOX 11	24 Apr.-9 June 1972 (7 folders)
BOX 12	12 June-28 July 1972 (7 folders)
BOX 13	31 July-15 Sept. 1972 (7 folders)
BOX 14	18 Sept.-3 Nov. 1972 (7 folders)
BOX 15	6 Nov.-22 Dec. 1972 (7 folders)
BOX 16	25 Dec. 1972-9 Feb. 1973 (7 folders)
BOX 17	12 Feb.-30 Mar. 1973 (7 folders)
BOX 18	2 Apr.-18 May 1973 (7 folders)
BOX 19	21 May-13 July 1973 (8 folders)

"Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson," 1970-1992

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 20	16 July-31 Aug. 1973 (7 folders)
BOX 21	3 Sept.-26 Oct. 1973 (8 folders)
BOX 22	29 Oct.-21 Dec. 1973 (8 folders)
BOX 23	25 Dec. 1973-15 Feb. 1974 (8 folders)
BOX 24	18 Feb.-12 Apr. 1974 (8 folders)
BOX 25	15 Apr.-31 May 1974 (7 folders)
BOX 26	3 June-19 July 1974 (7 folders)
BOX 27	22 July-5 Sept. 1974 (7 folders)
BOX 28	9 Sept.-1 Nov. 1974 (8 folders)
BOX 29	4 Nov.-20 Dec. 1974 (7 folders)
BOX 30	23 Dec. 1974-14 Feb. 1975 (8 folders)
BOX 31	17 Feb.-4 Apr. 1975 (7 folders)
BOX 32	9 Apr.-30 May 1975 (8 folders)
BOX 33	2 June-18 July 1975 (7 folders)
BOX 34	21 July-11 Sept. 1975 (8 folders)
BOX 35	15 Sept.-31 Oct. 1975 (7 folders)
BOX 36	3 Nov.-19 Dec. 1975 (7 folders)
BOX 37	22 Dec. 1975-6 Aug. 1976 (10 folders)
BOX 38	9 Aug.-1 Oct. 1976 (8 folders)
BOX 39	4 Oct.-19 Nov. 1976 (7 folders)
BOX 40	22 Nov.-31 Dec. 1976 (6 folders)
BOX 41	3 Jan.-11 Feb. 1977 (6 folders)
BOX 42	14 Feb.-25 Mar. 1977 (6 folders)
BOX 43	28 Mar.-6 May 1977 (6 folders)

"Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson," 1970-1992

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 44	9 May-17 June 1977 (6 folders)
BOX 45	20 June-29 July 1977 (6 folders)
BOX 46	1 Aug.-16 Sept. 1977 (7 folders)
BOX 47	19 Sept.-4 Nov. 1977 (7 folders)
BOX 48	7 Nov.-16 Dec. 1977 (6 folders)
BOX 49	19 Dec. 1977-27 Jan. 1978 (6 folders)
BOX 50	30 Jan.-10 Mar. 1978 (6 folders)
BOX 51	13 Mar.-28 Apr. 1978 (7 folders)
BOX 52	1 May-9 June 1978 (6 folders)
BOX 53	12 June-21 July 1978 (6 folders)
BOX 54	24 July-8 Sept. 1978 (6 folders)
BOX 55	11 Sept.-27 Oct. 1978 (7 folders)
BOX 56	30 Oct.-8 Dec. 1978 (6 folders)
BOX 57	11 Dec. 1978-26 Jan. 1979 (7 folders)
BOX 58	29 Jan.-16 Mar. 1979 (7 folders)
BOX 59	19 Mar.-27 Apr. 1979 (6 folders)
BOX 60	30 Apr.-8 June 1979 (6 folders)
BOX 61	11 June-27 July 1979 (7 folders)
BOX 62	30 July-21 Sept. 1979 (8 folders)
BOX 63	24 Sept.-2 Nov. 1979 (6 folders)
BOX 64	5 Nov.-14 Dec. 1979 (6 folders)
BOX 65	17 Dec. 1979-1 Feb. 1980 (7 folders)
BOX 66	4 Feb.-21 Mar. 1980 (6 folders)
BOX 67	24 Mar.-2 May 1980 (6 folders)

"Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson," 1970-1992

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 68	5 May-6 June 1980 (5 folders)
BOX 69	9 June-28 Aug. 1980 (9 folders)
BOX 70	1 Sept.-17 Oct. 1980 (7 folders)
BOX 71	27 Oct.-19 Dec. 1980 (8 folders)
BOX 72	30 Dec. 1980-27 Feb. 1981 (8 folders)
BOX 73	2 Mar.-29 May 1981 (8 folders)
BOX 74	1 June-7 Aug. 1981 (8 folders)
BOX 75	11 Aug.-2 Oct. 1981 (8 folders)
BOX 76	6 Oct.-4 Dec. 1981 (8 folders)
BOX 77	8 Dec. 1981-19 Feb. 1982 (9 folders)
BOX 78	23 Feb.-30 Apr. 1982 (9 folders)
BOX 79	4 May-25 June 1982 (8 folders)
BOX 80	5 July-3 Sept. 1982 (9 folders)
BOX 81	7 Sept.-5 Nov. 1982 (9 folders)
BOX 82	8 Nov. 1982-7 Jan. 1983 (8 folders)
BOX 83	11 Jan.-18 Mar. 1983 (8 folders)
BOX 84	22 Mar.-20 May 1983 (8 folders)
BOX 85	24 May-5 Aug. 1983 (8 folders)
BOX 86	9 Aug.-7 Oct. 1983 (8 folders)
BOX 87	11 Oct.-9 Dec. 1983 (8 folders)
BOX 88	13 Dec. 1983-24 Feb. 1984 (9 folders)
BOX 89	28 Feb.-4 May 1984 (9 folders)
BOX 90	8 May-29 June 1984 (8 folders)
BOX 91	10 July-14 Sept. 1984 (8 folders)

"Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson," 1970-1992

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 92	18 Sept.-9 Nov. 1984 (8 folders)
BOX 93	13 Nov. 1984-11 Jan. 1985 (8 folders)
BOX 94	15 Jan.-1 Mar. 1985 (7 folders)
BOX 95	19 Mar.-17 May 1985 (8 folders)
BOX 96	21 May-12 July 1985 (7 folders)
BOX 97	23 July-13 Sept. 1985 (7 folders)
BOX 98	17 Sept.-8 Nov. 1985 (7 folders)
BOX 99	12 Nov. 1985-3 Jan. 1986 (8 folders)
BOX 100	7 Jan.-21 Feb. 1986 (7 folders)
BOX 101	25 Feb.-18 Apr. 1986 (7 folders)
BOX 102	22 Apr.-6 June 1986 (7 folders)
BOX 103	10 June-29 Aug. 1986 (8 folders)
BOX 104	2 Sept.-24 Oct. 1986 (8 folders)
BOX 105	27 Oct.-31 Dec. 1986 (9 folders)
BOX 106	6 Jan.-20 Feb. 1987 (7 folders)
BOX 107	24 Feb.-1 May 1987 (8 folders)
BOX 108	5 May-24 July 1987 (8 folders)
BOX 109	28 July-18 Sept. 1987 (7 folders)
BOX 110	21 Sept.-6 Nov. 1987 (7 folders)
BOX 111	10 Nov.-31 Dec. 1987 (7 folders)
BOX 112	4 Jan.-26 Feb. 1988 (7 folders)
BOX 113	7 Mar.-24 June 1988 (8 folders)
BOX 114	27 June-2 Sept. 1988 (7 folders)
BOX 115	5 Sept.-18 Nov. 1988 (7 folders)

"Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson," 1970-1992

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 116	21 Nov. 1988-13 Jan. 1989 (7 folders)
BOX 117	16 Jan.-3 Mar. 1989 (6 folders)
BOX 118	6 Mar.-21 Apr. 1989 (7 folders)
BOX 119	1 May-16 June 1989 (7 folders)
BOX 120	19 June-11 Aug. 1989 (7 folders)
BOX 121	14 Aug.-6 Oct. 1989 (7 folders)
BOX 122	10 Oct.-8 Dec. 1989 (7 folders)
BOX 123	12 Dec. 1989-2 Feb. 1990 (7 folders)
BOX 124	6 Feb.-23 Mar. 1990 (6 folders)
BOX 125	26 Mar.-4 May 1990 (6 folders)
BOX 126	8 May-22 June 1990 (6 folders)
BOX 127	2 July-10 Aug. 1990 (6 folders)
BOX 128	14 Aug.-5 Oct. 1990 (7 folders)
BOX 129	9 Oct.-7 Dec. 1990 (7 folders)
BOX 130	11 Dec. 1990-7 June 1991 (9 folders)
BOX 131	11 June-26 July 1991 (6 folders)
BOX 132	30 July-3 Oct. 1991 (8 folders)
BOX 133	8 Oct.-29 Nov. 1991 (7 folders)
BOX 134	3 Dec. 1991-31 Jan. 1992 (7 folders)
BOX 135	4 Feb.-27 Mar. 1992 (8 folders)
BOX 136	31 Mar.-21 May 1992 (7 folders)