



## **BOB BELL**

Robert Lewis Bell was born in 1922 in Flint, Michigan, the youngest of three brothers. His show business career began as a U.S. Cavalryman extra for the motion picture *Arizona* (1940). Bob served in the Marine Corps and Navy from 1941 to 1946, before returning to Flint where he landed a job as a disc jockey at WMRP Radio. A year later, he moved to South Bend, Indiana's WHOT Radio where he met and married copywriter Carol Atkinson. They moved to Indianapolis where he broke into television on WFBM-TV.

Bob's flair for comedic character acting surfaced in 1953 when he was paired with talk show host Wally Phillips at WLWT-TV and WLW Radio in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1956, their boss, Ward Quaal, became General Manager of WGN Continental Broadcasting Company in Chicago and brought Bob and Wally along. In 1960, WGN-TV asked Bob to portray the character that would make him a Chicago television legend, "Bozo the Clown." Chicago's Bozo debuted as a 30-minute live weekday program at noon. The show expanded to an hour in 1961 with an orchestra, comedy sketches, circus acts, cartoons, games, prizes and a studio audience. The show succeeded unlike any children's show in Chicago television history. Bob's improvisational skills and double-entendres even attracted a huge adult following. The program began airing nationally via cable and satellite and studio audience reservations surpassed a 10-year wait.

Bob retired in 1984 and was immediately honored by the Television Academy with its prestigious Governors' Award. After raising four children, Bob and his wife Carol moved from Deerfield, Illinois, to Lake San Marcos, California. In 1986, he was greeted with a lengthy standing ovation when he appeared in the live broadcast of *The Bozo 25th Anniversary Special* from Medinah Temple in Chicago. Ten years later, Bob became the first portrayer of Bozo to be inducted into the International Clown Hall of Fame in Wisconsin.

On December 8, 1997, Bob Bell died due to heart failure at the age of 75. Governor Jim Edgar and Mayor Richard M. Daley proclaimed April 18, 1998, "Bob Bell Day" in the State of Illinois and City of Chicago as Addison Street near the WGN-TV Studios was named "Bob Bell Way."