



American Legends: Abbott & Costello

Charles River Editors

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- *Includes pictures.
- *Includes Abbott and Costello's own quotes about their lives and careers.
- *Includes a transcript of "Who's on First?"
- *Includes a bibliography for further reading.

"You never heard of a comedy team that didn't fight, did you? But for twenty years as a professional team, Lou and I were closer than man and wife." - Bud Abbott

"A husband is what's left of a sweetheart after the nerve has been killed." – Lou Costello

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history's most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors' American Legends series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America's most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

Ironically, one of America's most famous comedy duos, and the performers of the country's most famous skit, came together in part because Lou Costello had already failed to cut it in the film industry. In fact, Costello had appeared in a Laurel & Hardy film in 1927 before meeting his partner, Bud Abbott, on the burlesque circuit in New York City. In fact, the two first performed together in 1935 only because Abbott filled in for Costello's usual partner, who happened to be ill one fateful day.

Over time, Abbott & Costello perfected their routine, which typically consisted of Abbott playing the straight man while his dimwit partner acted foolishly and interrupted his plans. It was a shtick that also did well on radio, albeit one that required Costello to modify his voice with a higher pitch that not only differentiated him from Abbott but also made him sound appropriately dumber. By 1940, they were not only successful on the radio but also among America's most popular movie stars, a status they held almost consistently throughout the decade and into the early 1950s.

The legendary comedy duo performed together for decades, and like similar acts, their popularity began to wane over time, but Abbott & Costello are still household names today. While all of their material is still in syndication and watched by many, they are best known today for "Who's on First", the famous routine in which Abbott's answers about the names of baseball players at various positions on the field sound like questions and completely confuse Costello. Although the skit was pieced together from various others, it was immortalized by Abbott & Costello and helped popularize not only the duo but some of their subsequent material.

American Legends: Abbott & Costello examines the lives and careers of one of America's most famous comedy teams. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Abbott & Costello like never before, in no time at all.

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