

This Day in History... October 29, 1891

Birth of Fanny Brice

Actress and singer Fanny Brice was born Fania Borach on October 29, 1891, in New York City. Most well known for her radio character Baby Snooks, she was the inspiration for the musical and film *Funny Girl*.

Brice was the third of four children born to Jewish Hungarian and French immigrants who ran a saloon in New York City. She left school in 1908 to join a burlesque revue. She joined the famed *Ziegfeld Follies* in 1910, headlining the revue for two years. She returned in 1921 and remained into the 1930s. During her first year back, she gained acclaim for her performance of "My Man," which became her signature song. That same year she also introduced the song "Second Hand Rose," another song often associated with her. Brice recorded "My Man" and more than 20 other songs for Victor Talking Machine Company as well as Columbia Records.



Caricaturist Albert Hirschfeld hid his daughter Nina's name in the design of this stamp, which goes against the USPS's normal rules against secret marks.



Moss Hart co-wrote the *Baby Snooks's* radio premier in *The Ziegfeld Follies of the Air*.

Brice had a successful Broadway career, appearing in *Fioretta*, *Sweet and Low*, and *Billy Rose's Crazy Quilt*. She also appeared in several films, such as *My Man* (1928), *Be Yourself!* (1930) and *Everybody Sing* (1938). Brice was one of three performers to play themselves in the films *The Great Ziegfeld* (1936) and *Ziegfeld Follies* (1946).

Brice began performing on the radio in 1930, on the *Philco Hour*. She also contributed regularly to *The Chase and Sanborn Hour* in 1933. She's most well-known for her character, Baby Snooks. Brice had developed the character in 1912 while she was in vaudeville and in the 1930s, brought the character to a larger audience on the radio. She first performed as Baby Snooks on the radio in February 1936 as part of *The Ziegfeld Follies of the Air*. Brice then brought Baby Snooks to the *Good News Show* and *Maxwell House Coffee Time*. In 1944, Baby Snooks got her own half-hour comedy show. Initially named *Post Toasties Time* (named after the show's sponsor), it was later named *The Baby Snooks Show* and was often called *Baby Snooks and Daddy*.

Even though it was a radio show with a small live audience, Brice performed in costume. She took the role seriously, and later recalled, "Snooks is just the kid I used to be. She's my kind of youngster, the type I like. She has imagination. She's eager. She's alive. With all her deviltry, she is still a good kid, never vicious or mean. I love Snooks, and when I play her I do it as seriously as if she were real. I am Snooks. For 20 minutes or so, Fanny Brice ceases to exist."

Brice appeared on television one time to play Baby Snooks on *Popsicle Parade of Stars* in 1950. While the performance went well, she said she didn't think the character worked well in a visual medium and was better on the radio.

Brice continued to portray Baby Snooks on the radio until her death on May 29, 1951, from a cerebral hemorrhage. That night's episode aired as a memorial to Brice. Hanley Stafford, one of her co-stars, opened the show saying, "We have lost a very real, a very warm, a very wonderful woman."



Brice began portraying the bratty toddler *Baby Snooks* on the radio when she was 45 years old.

After her death, Brice received two stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, one for her film work and another for radio. Theaters named after Brice were opened at schools in New York and California. She also posthumously received a Grammy Hall of Fame Award for her recording of "My Man."

Brice has been portrayed on film several times over the years. In 1939, *Rose of Washington Square* was released with a story largely inspired by Brice's career and second marriage to gambler Nicky Arnstein. The film's title was taken from one of her famous tunes and included "My Man." Brice sued and won, forcing the studio to change the film. Most famously, Barbara Streisand portrayed Brice in the musical and film *Funny Girl*. Both were highly fictionalized, but earned Streisand awards and honors.



Danny Thomas played Jerry Dingle, a postman who always dreamed of other jobs, such as a circus owner or railroad conductor.

This Day in History... October 29, 1891

Birth of Fanny Brice

Actress and singer Fanny Brice was born Fania Borach on October 29, 1891, in New York City. Most well known for her radio character Baby Snooks, she was the inspiration for the musical and film *Funny Girl*.

Brice was the third of four children born to Jewish Hungarian and French immigrants who ran a saloon in New York City. She left school in 1908 to join a burlesque revue. She joined the famed *Ziegfeld Follies* in 1910, headlining the revue for two years. She returned in 1921 and remained into the 1930s. During her first year back, she gained acclaim for her performance of "My Man," which became her signature song. That same year she also introduced the song "Second Hand Rose," another song often associated with her. Brice recorded "My Man" and more than 20 other songs for Victor Talking Machine Company as well as Columbia Records.



Caricaturist Albert Hirschfeld hid his daughter Nina's name in the design of this stamp, which goes against the USPS's normal rules against secret marks.



Moss Hart co-wrote the *Baby Snooks's* radio premier in The *Ziegfeld Follies of the Air*.

Brice had a successful Broadway career, appearing in *Fioretta*, *Sweet and Low*, and *Billy Rose's Crazy Quilt*. She also appeared in several films, such as *My Man* (1928), *Be Yourself!* (1930) and *Everybody Sing* (1938). Brice was one of three performers to play themselves in the films *The Great Ziegfeld* (1936) and *Ziegfeld Follies* (1946).

Brice began performing on the radio in 1930, on the *Philco Hour*. She also contributed regularly to *The Chase and Sanborn Hour* in 1933. She's most well-known for her character, Baby Snooks. Brice had developed the character in 1912 while she was in vaudeville and in the 1930s, brought the character to a larger audience on the radio. She first performed as Baby Snooks on the radio in February 1936 as part of *The Ziegfeld Follies of the Air*. Brice then brought Baby Snooks to the *Good News Show* and *Maxwell House Coffee Time*. In 1944, Baby Snooks got her own half-hour comedy show. Initially named *Post Toasties Time* (named after the show's sponsor), it was later named *The Baby Snooks Show* and was often called *Baby Snooks and Daddy*.

Even though it was a radio show with a small live audience, Brice performed in costume. She took the role seriously, and later recalled, "Snooks is just the kid I used to be. She's my kind of youngster, the type I like. She has imagination. She's eager. She's alive. With all her deviltry, she is still a good kid, never vicious or mean. I love Snooks, and when I play her I do it as seriously as if she were real. I am Snooks. For 20 minutes or so, Fanny Brice ceases to exist."

Brice appeared on television one time to play Baby Snooks on *Popsicle Parade of Stars* in 1950. While the performance went well, she said she didn't think the character worked well in a visual medium and was better on the radio.

Brice continued to portray Baby Snooks on the radio until her death on May 29, 1951, from a cerebral hemorrhage. That night's episode aired as a memorial to Brice. Hanley Stafford, one of her co-stars, opened the show saying, "We have lost a very real, a very warm, a very wonderful woman."



Danny Thomas played Jerry Dingle, a postman who always dreamed of other jobs, such as a circus owner or railroad conductor.



Brice began portraying the bratty toddler *Baby Snooks* on the radio when she was 45 years old.

After her death, Brice received two stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, one for her film work and another for radio. Theaters named after Brice were opened at schools in New York and California. She also posthumously received a Grammy Hall of Fame Award for her recording of "My Man."

Brice has been portrayed on film several times over the years. In 1939, *Rose of Washington Square* was released with a story largely inspired by Brice's career and second marriage to gambler Nicky Arnstein. The film's title was taken from one of her famous tunes and included "My Man." Brice sued and won, forcing the studio to change the film. Most famously, Barbara Streisand portrayed Brice in the musical and film *Funny Girl*. Both were highly fictionalized, but earned Streisand awards and honors.

Mystic Stamp Company • Camden, NY 13316