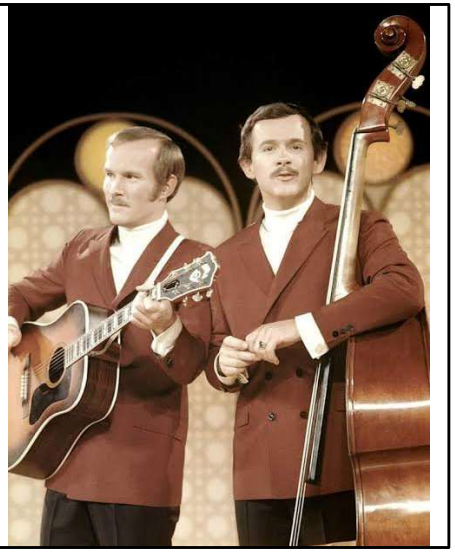
77th Young Reunion 2026

Introducing our Famous Cousins

The Smothers Brothers

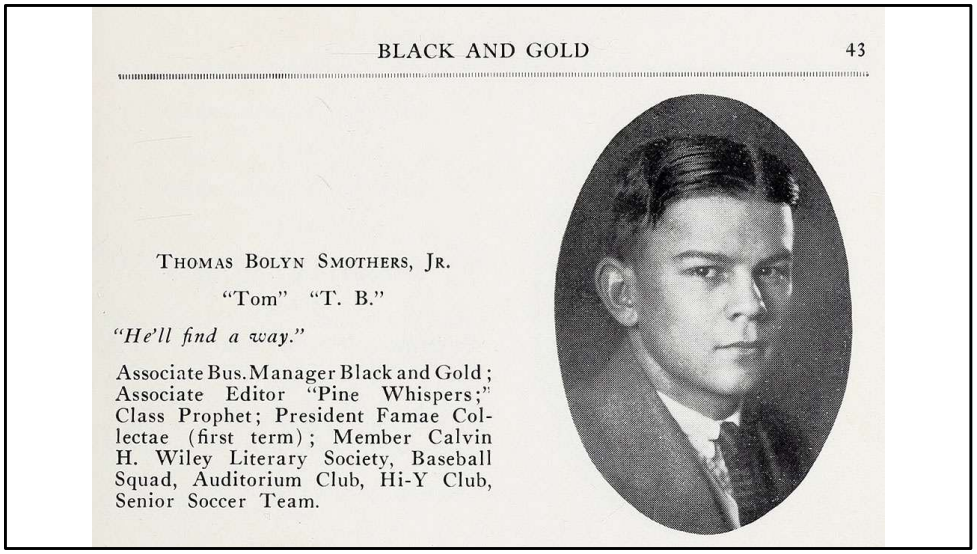


By John S. Young

As you can see, I've found out that we are related to the Smothers Brothers. I was watching a Johnny Carson rerun one night and he was reading viewer questions they had sent him and one of the letters was from Winston-Salem. Dick Smothers happen to be on the show that night too and later mentioned to Johnny that they had relatives in Winston-Salem. So that lead me to looking into their family tree and as I went up their family tree, I found that their great grandmother was a Martha Jane Young. So, that info led me to the following details.

Relation / Generation		Benjamin YOUNG Sr	Zipporah GIST	
Great Uncle	Benjamin YOUNG Jr	Jane ABBOT	William YOUNG	Mary MAJORS
1st Cousin	David YOUNG	Verlinda SULLIVAN	Benjamin YOUNG	Judith DUNCAN
2nd Cousin	Albert Calvin YOUNG	Melissa WALL	William H YOUNG	Elizabeth WOOD
3rd Cousin	James Wesley YOUNG	Emma Lee SMITH	**Martha Jane YOUNG**	William Alexander REID
4th Cousin	Marvin John YOUNG	Ruby LEWIS	Maude Frances REID	Thomas Bolyn SMOTHERS Sr
5th Cousin	Marvin Dean YOUNG	Phyllis SPENCER	Thomas SMOTHERS Jr	Ruth REMICK
6th Cousin	John Spencer YOUNG		Tom and Dick Smothers	

Benjamin Young Sr. was mine and their 5th Great Grand Father which make us 6th cousins.
They are 6th cousins to everyone in my generation and they are 5th cousins to everyone in my dad's generation like Larry, Hassell and so on.
We come from the Benjamin Young Jr branch and they come from the William Young branch. James Wesley Young and Martha Jane Young were 3rd cousins. Martha and her husband William Reid lived in the Bever Island area of Stokes and had a daughter Maude Frances REID in 1880. She would grow up and marry Thomas Bolyn SMOTHERS Sr. and they lived in the Huntsville Township area of Rockingham County in the 1900's which is on the East Side of what is now Belews Lake or maybe in the middle of what is now Belews Lake.



BLACK AND GOLD 43

THOMAS BOLYN SMOTHERS, JR.

"Tom" "T. B."

"He'll find a way."

Associate Bus. Manager Black and Gold; Associate Editor "Pine Whispers;" Class Prophet; President Famae Collectae (first term); Member Calvin H. Wiley Literary Society, Baseball Squad, Auditorium Club, Hi-Y Club, Senior Soccer Team.

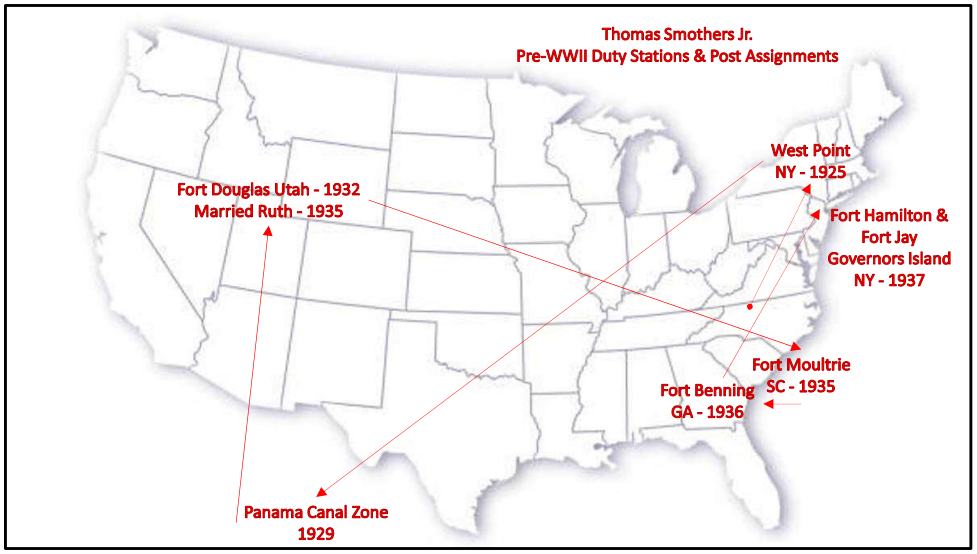
They would have a son, Thomas SMOTHERS Jr, in 1908 in Rockingham but end up moving to Winston-Salem in the following years and living on Sprague St.

Tom went to RJ Reynolds HS and graduated with honors in 1925.

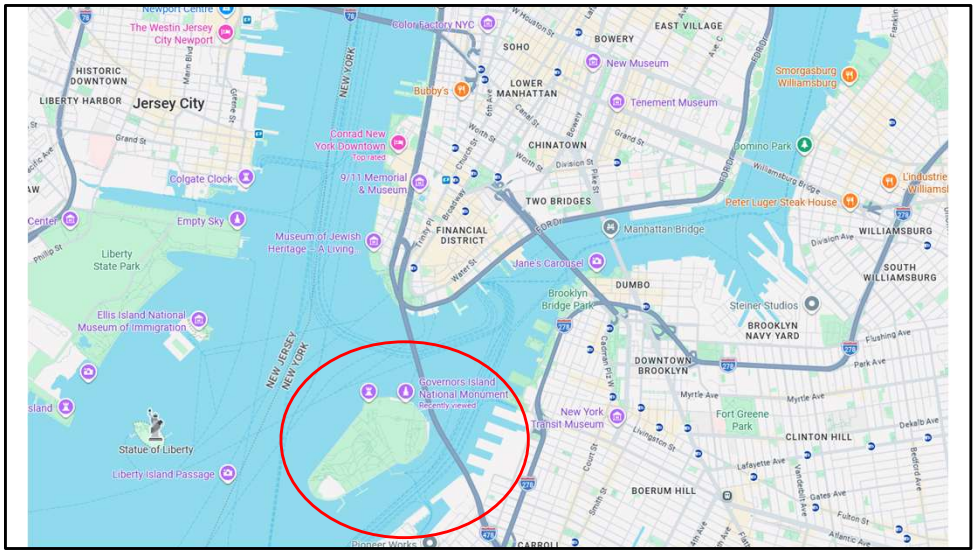


THOMAS BOLYN SMOTHERS, JR.
Fifth District, North Carolina
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

After high school he entered the United States Military Academy at West Point. He was in his first year at West Point when our family had this **portrait** taken. He graduated from West Point in 1929 becoming a career military officer starting out as a 2nd Lieutenant. Between the outbreak of World War II in Europe (September 1939) and the end of the war in the Pacific (August 1945), Tom was stationed in the following locations:

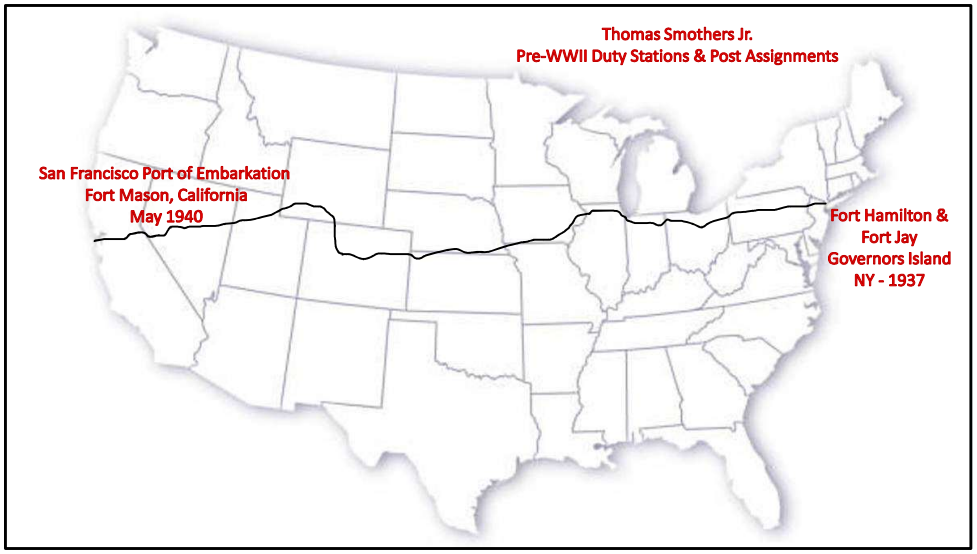


From West Point he served three years in the Panama Canal Zone. In 1932 he moved on to Fort Douglas, Utah and this is where he met Ruth Remick from Denver, CO. In 1935, they were married in Salt Lake City. From Utah they would move on to Fort Moultrie, S.C., then to Fort Benning, GA., and finally to Fort Hamilton, N.Y.

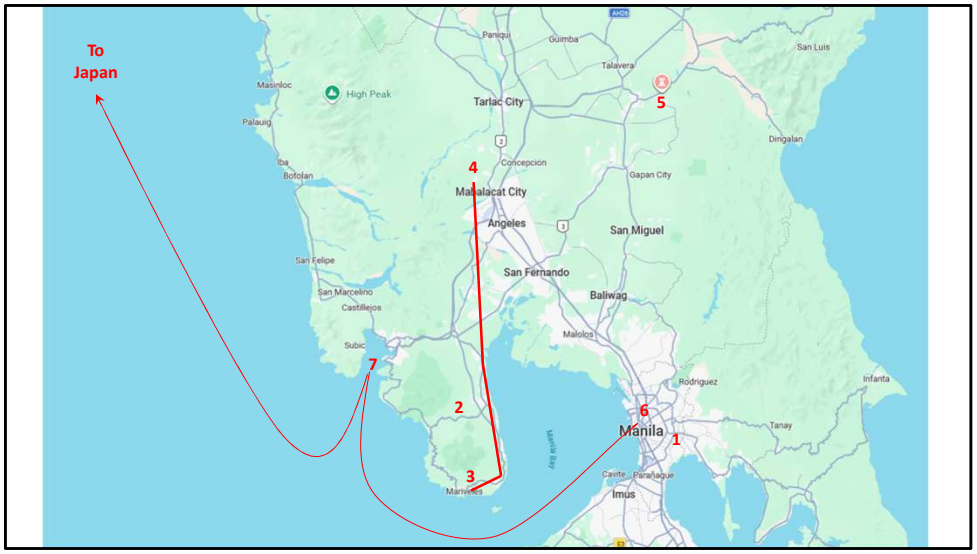


Tom and Dick came along in 1937 and 1938. The boys were born at Fort Jay on Governors Island, NY which is a small island about 1-mile south of NYC and 1.5 miles East of the statue of Liberty. Fort Jay had a maternity hospital for service families.

In September of 1939 hostilities broke out in Europe and Japan had already attacked China in 1937. So, with hostilities growing in Asia, the US decided to deploy troops to the Philippines because the Philippines was a U.S. commonwealth at the time.



By May of 1940, Tom had attained the rank of Major, and after receiving orders transferring him into the Philippine Department, Tom and his family traveled across the continental United States by train to reach San Francisco before embarking on a ship to the Philippines.

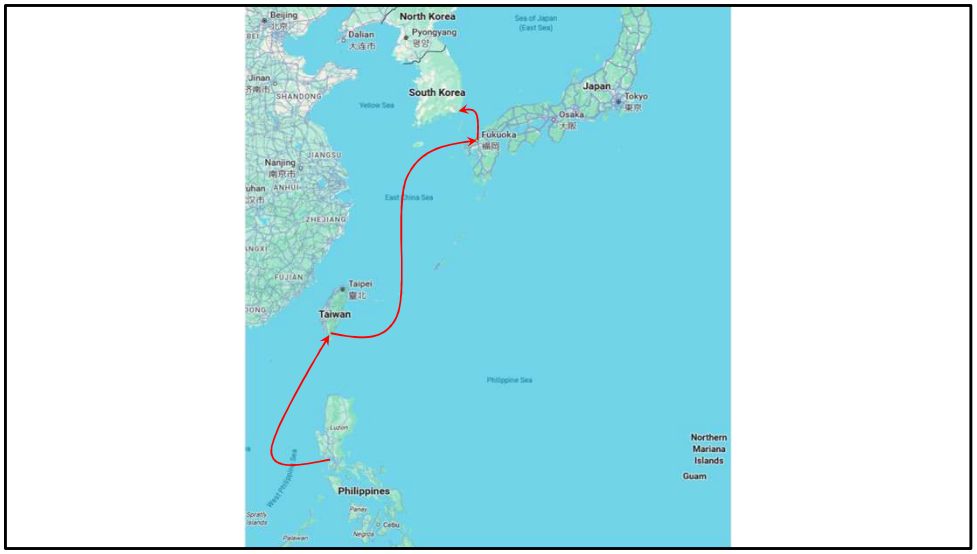


The family arrived in July of 1940 at Fort William McKinley just outside Manila which was the primary station upon arriving in the Philippines. Tom was attached to the 45th Infantry Regiment (called the Philippine Scouts). In May of 1941 the U.S. military ordered the evacuation of military dependents and non-combatants from the Philippines. So, Ruth and the boys would return to the US and set up home in Redondo Beach, CA just outside of LA. Ruth was pregnant at this time with Sharon and she was born in September of 1941.

Three months later; just hours after Pearl Harbor on Dec 7th 1941 the Japanese would also start bombing the Philippines. Tom was deployed to the Bataan Peninsula and fought in the Battle of Bataan which started on January 7th 1942. On March 12th General McAuthur left the area by PT boat and ended up in Australia. This is when he gave his famous 'I Shall Return' speech. By April 9th the Japanese had forced all US forces to the Southern end of the Bataan Peninsula and those troops had to surrender.

After their surrender Camp O'Donnell became the primary holding camp following the surrender of Bataan and Tom would be one of the POWs on the Bataan Death March in April 1942. The march to Camp O'Donnell was around 65 miles and over 500 Americas would die on the way. Eight months later in December, his family received word that he was a POW.

Tom would then be transferred to the Cabanatuan POW Camp and live there until late 1944.
By then the US was on the offensive and the Japanese wanted to move all POW's to Japan.
Bilibid Prison in Manila was the assembly point for POWs selected for transport to the Japanese mainland in late 1944.
Tom was aboard the POW transport ship Oryoku **'oreo-ku'** Maru to Japan when it was bombed and sunk by a U.S. naval aircraft from the USS Hornet on December 15, 1944 as it entered Subic Bay in the Philippines.
Tom survived and was transferred to the Enoura '**eh-noh-oo-rah'** Maru to continue the trip to Japan.

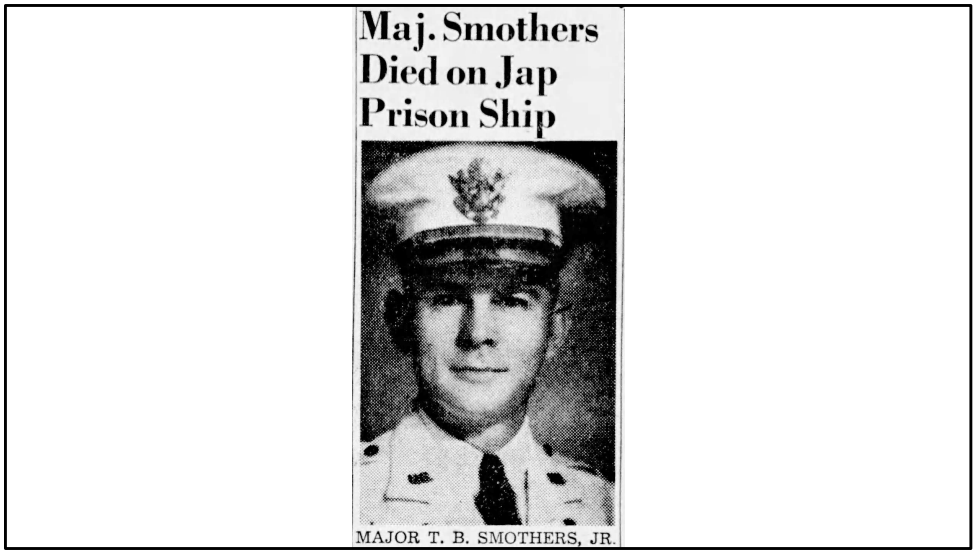


The ship stopped in what is now Tiawan on its way to Japan but was bombed again by US forces in Takao Harbor in January 1945. Tom survived but was probably injured in this bombing.

*He was moved to the Brazil Maru that continued on to Japan and reached Fukuoka **'foo·koo·ow·kuh'**, Japan late January 1945; held as a prisoner at Fukuoka POW Camp #3 and Camp #22. But Japan was under major attacks now by the US and wanted to transfer all POWs to Manchuria; in what is now China.

*In Late April 1945, the Japanese military orders the evacuation of remaining senior Allied officers to the Mukden POW camp in Manchuria by way of Korea.

On April 26, 1945 Major Smothers is transported via stretcher to the Fukuoka docks and loaded onto a ferry transport bound for Korea. Only hours into the short voyage across the Korea Strait, his body finally gives out due to his injuries and pneumonia and was buried at sea at age 36.



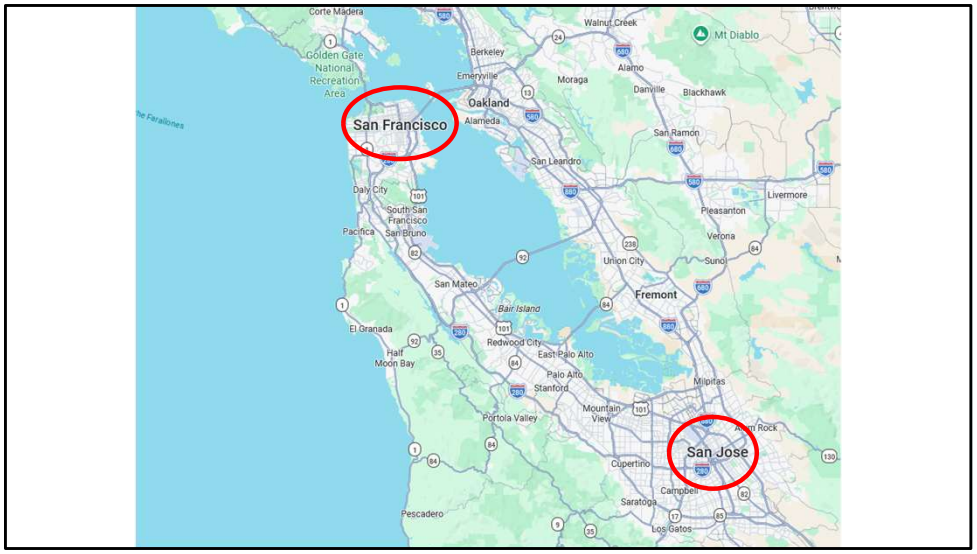
Four months later on August 15, 1945 the Japanese surrendered and bring WWII to an end. Toms' family was notified of his death three months later in November of 1945.



Photo by Jean Cunningham

THE CHILDREN of the late Major Thomas B. Smothers Jr., for whom the Army Reserve Armory here will be named, are greeted at the airport by an aunt, Mrs. Robert Masten, left. The children are Sharon, seated, Dick, standing left, and Thomas B. 3d.

In 1952, a committee in Forsyth County named the new Army Reserve armory on Stadium Drive in Winston-Salem in honor of Major Thomas B. Smothers, Jr. Some of his friends bought air tickets for his children so that they could fly from California to attend the naming ceremony. The boys would have been 14 and 15 then. (The building still stands at Patterson Ave. and N Liberty St.)



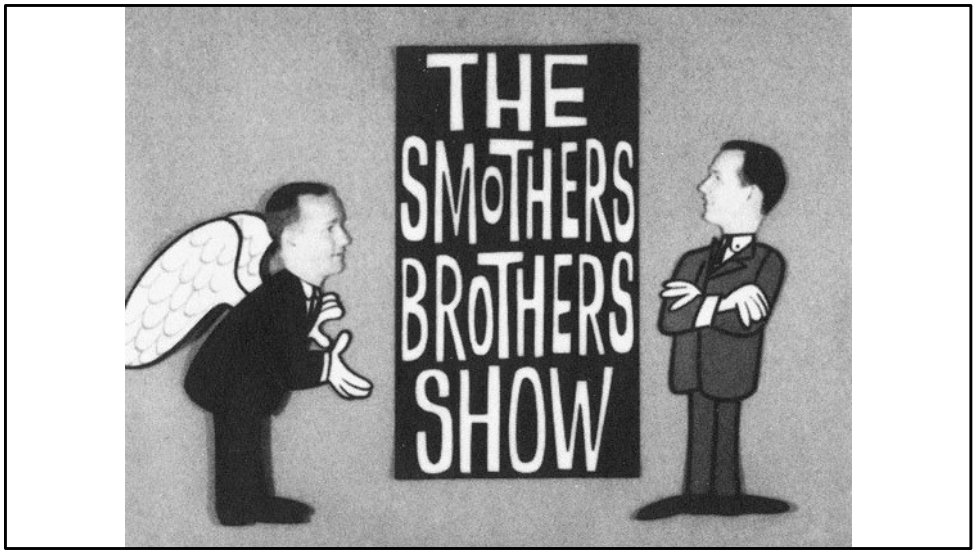
Tom's sons Tom III and Dick grew up in Redondo Beach, a suburb on Los Angeles on the coast, and graduated from Redondo Union High School in 1955 and 1957. They would go on to attend San Jose State College which is south of San Francisco and in an area now know better as Silicon Valley. Tom learned to play the guitar on his own since age 10 and would encourage Dick to learn the bass when they were in college. They wanted to become a Folk Music group. Their musical and comedy act gained rapid popularity while they were performing at local venues in San Jose, leading them to leave school to tour professionally full-time. They would start preforming in SF clubs in 1959.



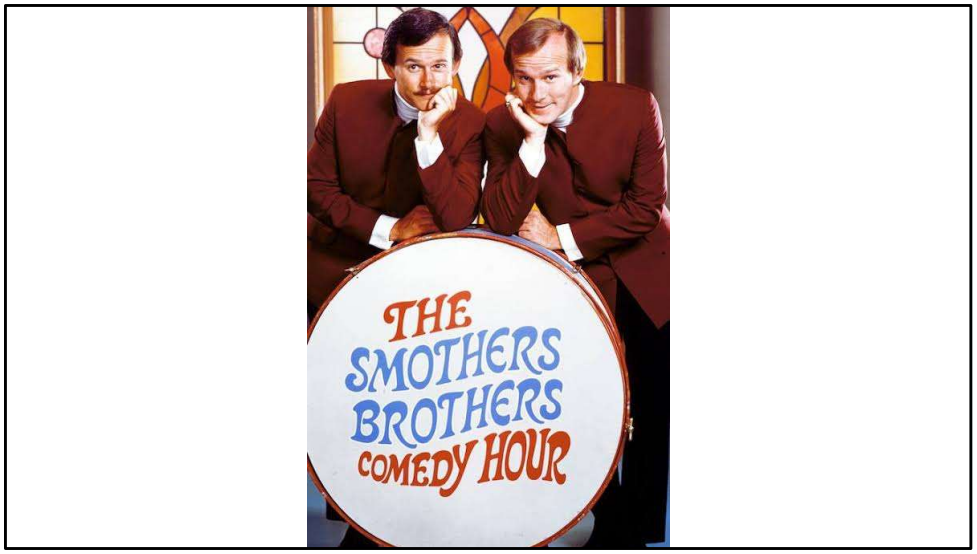
They became well known preforming at the famous Purple Onion in SF which was ironically just blocks from the port where they boarded the ship that took them to the Philippines in 1940.



Their TV debut was in 1961 on the Jack Parr Show and were guest on the Judy Garland Show in 1963.



After many hit albums and songs, CBS offered them a **sitcom** opportunity called The Smothers Brothers Show which ran one season from 1965 to 1966. Tom and Dick didn't care much for the show and would later begin negotiations with CBS for their next project. Tom insisted on complete creative control, serving as executive producer and hiring his own writing staff. CBS agreed but put the show on Sunday night at 9PM opposite Bonanza on NBC thinking that the brothers would fail. Instead of failing, the show became an immediate smash hit.



The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour which began in Feb of 1967 had some of the greatest comedy writers in US history.

Writers and Folk Music Stars

Mason Williams – Head Writer of SBCH, SNL and song 'Classical Gas'

Rob Reiner – Meat Head on All & The Family

Bob Einstein – Super Dave Osborne

Steve Martin

Glen Campbell

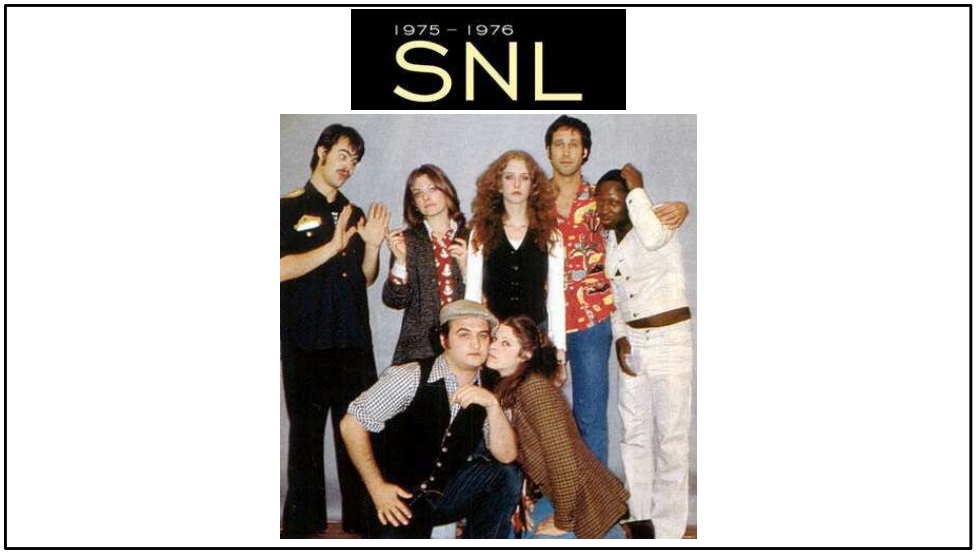
Pat Paulsen – Presidential Candidate

Jim Stafford – song 'Spiders and Snakes'

Don Novello – Father Guido Sarducci

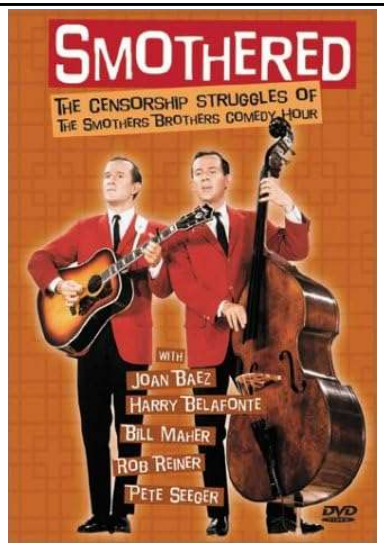


But their sharp comedy hit hard with politicians along with CBS executives mostly due to the Vietnam War. CBS cut several of the guest from their show and battles ensued. CBS would end up canceling their show on April 6th, 1969. The show turned out to be a defining moment in television history transforming them from conventional TV actors into central figures and writers of 1960s and 70s television culture and free-speech battles.



Many of the writers from the Comedy Hour would go on to write for and help create many sitcoms and shows in the future most notably Saturday Night Live which began in 1975.

Click for Last Show Video



When our cousin Tom Smothers passed away in 2023, many television historians explicitly noted that **"it's hard to imagine a *Saturday Night Live* without the Smothers Brothers having led the way"**. Media experts frequently trace a direct line from *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* to *SNL*, noting that modern late-night political satire **"would not have happened without them".**

So, for that I am very thankful for our famous cousins.

In conclusion, I can't say it any better than what they stated at the end of their last show on April 20th, 1969; so, watch carefully and see if you can find the similarities and the differences between then and today.

https://youtu.be/K1JMlWPw6NM?si=WVv9M3NfzWB9ZRMg&t=2627

President Lydon B. Johnson

"To be genuinely funny at a time when the world is in crisis is a task that would tax the talents of a genius. To be consistently fair when standards of fair play are constantly questioned demands the wisdom of a saint.

It is part of the price of leadership of this great and Free Nation to be the target of clever satirists. You have given the gift of laughter to our people. May we never grow so somber or self-important that we fail to appreciate the humor in our lives."