Meadows, Audrey (1924?-1996) Encyclopedia Article

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Contents

Meadows, Audrey (1924?-1996) Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Meadows, Audrey (1924?-1996).....3

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Actress Audrey Meadows was born Audrey Cotter in 1924 (though her birthdate is listed in other sources between 1921 and 1926) to Episcopal missionary parents in Wu Chang, China. She intended to become a journalist, but her sister, Jayne, persuaded her to pursue a career in show business. Meadows had an on-again, off-again career on television, radio, and the Broadway stage when she happened upon her most famous, and memorable, role as Alice Kramden on *The Jackie Gleason Show* in 1952. At first considered too young and pretty for the role of the long-suffering wife of Ralph Kramden, loud-mouthed bus driver and perennial hatcher of get-rich-schemes, Meadows submitted photos to Gleason of herself dressed in dowdy dresses with her hair askew. He hired her for the role, which had originally been created by Pert Kelton on the "Honeymooners" sketches on Gleason's *Cavalcade of Stars.* When Gleason brought the show to CBS in 1952, he replaced Kelton with Meadows. She performed in "The Honeymooners"' sketches on his hour long show from 1952 to 1955 and then in the classic 39 episodes of *The Honeymooners* from October 1955 to September 1956. She played Alice as strong but practical and understanding in her constant crusade to better the Kramdens' life while opposing her blustering husband's relentless pursuit of crack-brained schemes to get rich. She was nominated for four Emmys as Best Actress in a Supporting Role from 1953 through 1956, winning the coveted award in 1954. Meadows did some guest shots on television dramas and panel shows, and she had a featured role in the Cary Grant/Doris Day film *That Touch of Mink* (1962). After marrying Continental Airlines chairman Robert Six, she retired from show business. In 1977 she returned to television for a *Honeymooners* reunion and followed with guest shots on *The Love Boat* and other shows, as well as a recurring role on *Too Close For Comfort* in 1982-1983. Audrey Meadows died of lung cancer on February 3, 1996.

Further Reading:

Brooks, Tim and Earle Marsh. *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows 1946-Present.* 6th edition. New York, Ballantine Books, 1995.

McCrohan, Donna. *The Honeymooners' Companion: The Kramdens and the Nortons Revisited.* New York, Workman Publishing Company, 1985.