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Legendary comedian and Chicagoan Bob Newhart dies at 94

Chicago's own Bob Newhart, the soft spoken, but sharply dry iconic comedian who was at the helm of two legendary TV series "The Bob Newhart Show" and "Newhart" and won Grammy Awards for album of the year and best new artist for his 1960 breakthrough record 'The Button-Down Mind of Bob Newhart' died today in Los Angeles. He was 94.

After the success of "The Button-Down Mind," Newhart starred in his own variety show with NBC's, "The Bob Newhart Show." Though it was canceled after one season, the comedian earned an Emmy nomination and a Peabody for his work on the show. But his comedic genius was apparent, and his mastery of slow-burn silence made him a comedy star with two beloved and critically acclaimed CBS hits: "The Bob Newhart Show" in the 1970s and, a few years later, "Newhart." At the conclusion of "Newhart" Bob made history with what is considered by many to be the best series finale ever, which dismissed the entire series as a dream and ended with its star back in bed with his wife from the earlier "Bob Newhart Show," Suzanne Pleshette.

"Bob was a friend to me and to the Museum of Broadcast Communications for as long as I can remember. I had the pleasure of hosting this comedy icon on my WGN Radio show over the last 10+ years," remembers David Plier, chair, president and CEO of the Museum of Broadcast Communications.

“He was a warm and kind man, generous with his time. Bob kept tabs on what stories he shared with me over the past 10 years so that he could keep the conversation fresh for the audience. My off-air conversations with Bob were always heartfelt, sprinkled with a few laughs. We spoke about aging, kids, divorce, family illness and whatever came to mind. I will miss him.”

Bob also guest starred on many popular shows including “The Ed Sullivan Show”, “The Simpsons”, “ER” and even “Svengoolie”. As a frequent guest on “The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson,” he filled in as host for Carson nearly 100 times. Bob returned to television in 2013 for his portrayal of Professor Proton in "The Big Bang Theory," a recurring role that introduced Newhart’s many talents to a new generation of sitcom fans.

In addition to decades of critical and audience success, Newhart received many accolades throughout his career including three Grammys, an Emmy, a Golden Globe, and the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor.

Prayers, thoughts and love go out to his children Robert, Timothy, Jennifer and Courtney, Bob’s beloved grandchildren, his longtime manager Jerry Digney and Bob’s millions of fans worldwide.

The Museum of Broadcast Communications is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit entity which supports media preservation and education, and strives to connect consumers to past, present and future of media.