

Mary Kay Stearns, 93, a Star of One of TV's Earliest Shows, Dies

By Neil Genzlinger

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Mary Kay Stearns, who with her husband, Johnny, starred in “Mary Kay and Johnny,” a very early television sitcom that set the stage for better-known marital fare like “I Love Lucy,” died on Nov. 17 in Newport Beach, Calif. She was 93.

Her son Jonathan informed The New York Times of her death recently; it had not been previously reported.

Ms. Stearns was a theater actress in 1947 when an agent suggested that she audition for a job on a New York garment maker’s primitive TV show.

“What it consisted of is Mary Kay, looking 14 years old, wearing junior dresses and modeling them and telling about the belt and this and that,” Johnny Stearns recalled in an oral history for the Archive of American Television in 1999. When someone asked him what he thought of the program, Mr. Stearns responded that he didn’t think it was much of a program at all and suggested that the garment maker instead sponsor a show that the Stearnses would create about a fictional couple not unlike them.

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