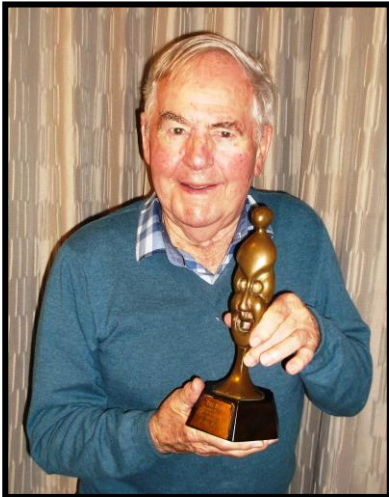


John Maybury

11 Feb 1929 - 16 Oct 2016



John Ernest Maybury was born in Wellington on 11 February 1929 to Nellie (born Doull) and Jack Maybury. Jack was a quizmaster, broadcaster and a talented musician able to play 12 instruments (including bagpipes). He played sax in New Zealand's first Jazz band, the *Ambassador Musical Trio*, in 1923 and later led the dance band at *The Realm* in Hāitaitai and Central Wellington's *Majestic Ballroom*. In the mid 1930s Jack played baritone sax in the *Radio 2YA Rhythm Symphonists* and later became their conductor. In 1946 he got his quiz career underway where he hosted *Quiz Kids*, *Lux Money Go Round & Lever Hit Parade* and many other radio quiz shows. Nellie was a ballet dancer and pianist who later toured with the first Benny winner Edgar Benyon, being sawn in half, made to disappear and as his accompanist. Her Scottish father, Gerry, worked on Sommes Island during the war as a sentry. John has an older sister, Shirley, and later, when his father remarried, two half siblings, Sonya and Vaughan.

The Mayburys moved to Christchurch where Jack initially sold car radios then worked the afternoon slot for *3ZB*. John attended *Marist Primary School* in Wellington then *St Mary's Primary* in Christchurch. When he was 9 his parents separated and Nellie returned to Wellington for a year. Times were tough for the 3 of them, sharing a room in boarding houses or above a pub until Nellie could make ends meet back in Christchurch, playing at the *Mayfair Lounge* and the *Winter Gardens*, the top ballroom venues of the time. She also accompanied at *Billie Addis' Dance Studio*, where John became a star pupil winning several championships, notably in comedy. It was Nellie's vision that her children should follow in show business that prepared John for his future career although sport was his first love. He gained a scholarship to *St. Bedes College* where he became captain of the soccer team, a squash champion and held the mile sprint record. He continued through his adult years boxing, playing cricket and rugby and he later held a 12 handicap in golf.

John often snuck into the *3ZB* music library and spent hours listening to jazz greats such as Duke Ellington and Bob Crosby but it was not until later in his life that he took up an interest in playing music, strange considering that both his parents played professionally. He'd been a member of the *St Christopher's Boys Club* from the age of 10 so, on leaving school in 1945, John decided to become a P.E. teacher but soon discovered that all the positions were being given to WW2 returning veterans. He went to *Christchurch Teacher's Training College* for a year then drifted into accountancy. In 1949 his sister, who worked for the sales manager at *3ZB*, organised an audition for John to become a radio announcer on their breakfast show. This led to casual gigs as an emcee for functions, shows and clubs. In 1952 he pulled off his famous radio gaffe, announcing that an alien spaceship had crashed in *Hagley Park* and Martians were running around the city centre. He was moved to the Timaru program department after that! In another prank, he had reported that the water pipes in his studio had broken and he was being flooded. The audience heard John's frantic efforts to escape the rising water levels until, with appropriate sound effects, it covered the microphone. Another station transfer to Palmerston North but eventually made it back to Radio 2ZB in Wellington.



Then, in 1955, John moved to Sydney to become the *Radio 2SM* Breakfast host and a year later he moved to *3KZ* in Melbourne where he met and married Helen who was secretary to the production manager and assisted with a children's quiz show. Later she became John's secretary, stage assistant and Wellington office manager.

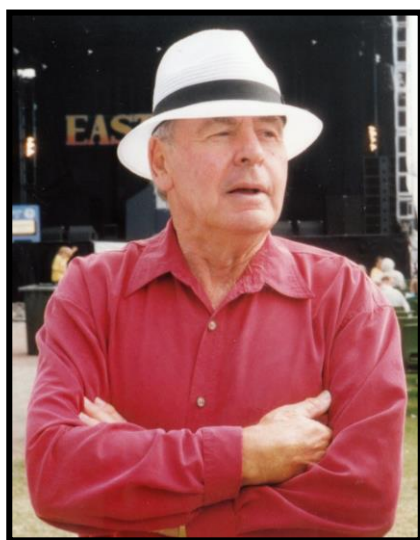
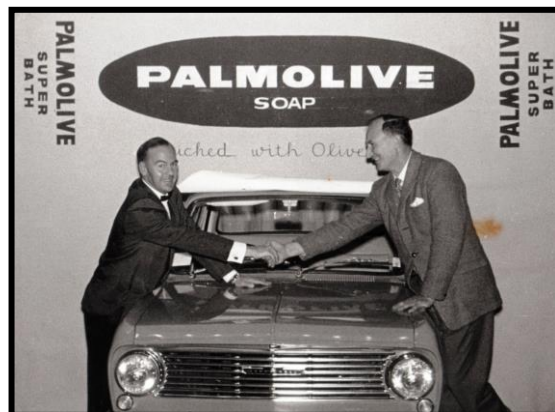
When Jack Maybury died in 1960, John was asked to emcee his 1960 *Tauranga Soundshell Christmas Carnival*, then Jack's sponsor asked John to submit ideas for new radio programs and he created, *Big Deal*, *It's On the Cards* and *Take the Stake*, very successful national quiz shows which he hosted until 1964 when television shows such as

Selwyn Toogood's *It's in the Bag* took hold.

John did a few TV shows, such as *Jackpot*, but never enjoyed working on Television; he is a dancer at heart and found it hard to stand on one spot. In 1975 he fronted *Personality Squares* on the newly founded TV2.

He was invited to be a freelance announcer for the *Auckland Easter Show* in 1962 and has continued there ever since booking acts, doing continuity and running his famous quiz shows and talent quests. He recalls compering Joe Brown's *Miss New Zealand Competition* then rushing off to do the build up for the main act in the Arena. For nine years, he drove up annually from his home in Paraparaumu with his family until they moved to Auckland permanently in 1971. He was eventually emceeing 10 major A & P shows each year. One job he especially loved was talent spotting at Busker's Festivals throughout Australasia. In 2016 John was still active at the Easter Show with his son John Jr doing the more energetic work.

That's a 54-year long gig! John co-hosted an evening game show on News Talk ZB when it went to a talkback format in 1987 then John and John Jr co-hosted the *Radio Today FM Breakfast Show* in 1995.



In 1977 he received a Scroll of Honour, the Benny in 1984, Life Membership in 1996 and in 2012 was given a Certificate of Achievement. He worked on the VAC Committee in 1975 and 1976. He was especially delighted with being awarded the Benny with its connection to his mother and also recalling his work as emcee for Edgar Benyon at the *Christchurch Industries Fair* in the 1960's. He recalls his mother telling the tale about Edgar's great disappearing trick in Te Awamutu. He had got bad houses there so invited the whole town to a free final show. Nellie played the overture, the curtains opened and there was a placard simply saying, "Gone With the Wind". And Benyon had indeed gone!

While John never really retired, he lived at a retirement complex on the Hibiscus Coast. He has a son, John Jr, three daughters, Jan, Diane and Sue plus four grandchildren. His beloved wife Helen passed away in 2015.

John told me that he was fit as a fiddle when I did the interview at his unit but when we corrected the finished edit it was at *North Shore Hospital* a few weeks later and his son John Jr took me aside and told me that John had only a few days left to go. I thought he was pulling my leg but sure enough, his father passed on a few days later on 16th October 2016. RIP John!