

Betty Lynn

The journey to Mount Airy for Betty Lynn began in Kansas City, Missouri, where she was born Elizabeth Theresa Ann Lynn on August 29, 1926. Betty began studying dance at age 5 and by age 14 she was acting and singing in supper clubs and on local radio shows.

During World War II, USO talent scouts discovered Betty, and at age 18 she began performing in their shows on the East Coast. Betty then signed up to perform for the USO Camp Shows overseas, which took guitarist Tommy Decker and her to Iran and Casablanca and then unexpectedly to the front lines of conflict in the China-Burma-India Theater.

While doing her USO tour, Betty found herself in China, on the infamous Burma Road, and literally on the Road to Mandalay. She eventually ended up in Calcutta, where she was one of the first Americans to visit American POWs who had just been released to a Calcutta hospital after the fall of Rangoon in 1945. For her service "above and beyond the call of duty," Betty received a special commendation from the U.S. State Department, and was later named Honorary Colonel in the American Legion.

Back in New York after the war, Betty quickly found work. She was touring with *Park Avenue* in preparation for that new show's Broadway run when she caught the attention of legendary movie mogul Daryl F. Zanuck, who signed Betty to a contract with 20th Century Fox. Betty then moved with her mother to Hollywood, where her first film for Fox was 1948's *Sitting Pretty* with Clifton Webb, Robert Young, and Maureen O'Hara. Betty won a Photoplay Gold Medal for her portrayal of Ginger. That same year Betty also was in *Apartment for Peggy* with Jeanne Crain and William Holden. Fox then lent Betty to Warner Bros. to play the title role in *June Bride* with Bette Davis. She went on to make a string of movies for Fox and other studios, including RKO, MGM, and Universal. Highlights of those years included *Mother Is a Freshman*, *Father Was a Fullback*, *Cheaper by the Dozen*, *Payment on Demand* (reuniting with Bette Davis), and *Behind the High Wall*.

As the movie studio system began to wane and television became more of a force in the 1950s, Betty pursued opportunities in television. Early performances included eight months in *The Egg and I*, TV's first comedy serial, which was broadcast live from New York five days a week. She later played the female lead opposite Ray Bolger in *Where's Raymond?* for a season back in Los Angeles. Whenever her schedule allowed, Betty also performed in Los Angeles and elsewhere in theater productions, including the lead role in *Peg O' My Heart* and roles in *The Moon Is Blue*, *King of Hearts*, *Be Your Age*, *Come Blow Your Horn*, and *Love Letters*.

Betty became a familiar face in many of the top TV Westerns during their heyday of the 1950s and early 1960s. Her notable appearances included episodes of popular shows such as *Bronco*, *Wagon Train*, *Cheyenne*, *Wells Fargo*, and *Sugarfoot*, as well as being co-star for two seasons of Disney Presents: *Texas John Slaughter* with Tom Tryon. She also performed in more than two dozen episodes of NBC's Matinee Theater.

Just as Texas John Slaughter was winding down, Mayberry came calling, and Betty became Barney Fife's true sweetheart, Thelma Lou. America, too, fell in love with Thelma Lou for the next five seasons of *The Andy Griffith Show*. And through all the decades since. After Barney and Thelma Lou left Mayberry, Betty continued working in television, including recurring roles on both *My Three Sons* and *Family Affair*. She also worked with Andy Griffith again when she played Sarah, Ben Matlock's secretary during the first season of *Matlock* in 1986. And everything was made right in Mayberry when Thelma Lou became Mrs. Barney Fife in the hit TV movie, *Return to Mayberry*, also in 1986.

In the years following that success, Betty delighted fans at countless Mayberry cast reunions and festivals and other special occasions. She made her first visit to Mount Airy for Mayberry Days in



Siamese Twin Exhibit

Eng and Chang Bunker's journey led them from Samut Songkram, Siam to Mount Airy, NC where they raised 21 children. There are hundreds of descendants who still reside in the area while others are scattered all over the world. The Siamese Twins exhibit has numerous photos of the twins, their families, and artifacts from their lives. The Bunker family has an annual reunion on the last weekend of July each year. In 2017, the Surry Arts Council will host Ryan Pino, a descendant, who will share his research on their Chinese identity and status as the first naturalized Asian Americans. The twins and their families overcame many physical, social, and cultural obstacles during their remarkable lives. Their amazing legacy lives on.



Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

1. The Siamese Twins came to reside in western NC as the result of an invitation from a physician friend to visit the area for some hunting and fishing. They liked it and decided to build a home and stay.
2. The Twins moved to Mount Airy and lived in the same house for 12 years before they built two homes. The Eng and Chang Bunker Bridge crosses Stewart's Creek, the body of water that divided their land when they built the second home.
3. The wills of Eng and Chang Bunker are shown in the Siamese Twins exhibit. They summarize the Twins' family values and their focus on the education of all of their children.
4. Eng and Chang Bunker were the first Asians to become citizens of this country. When they became American citizens, it was actually not legal for them to do so.
5. Eng and Chang were excellent fishermen, expert in the use of firearms, excellent performers on the flute, excellent with tools and construction, and above average in intellect.
6. Eng and Chang were Whigs.
7. Eng and Chang each had a son who fought in the Confederate army. Each son was captured and held in a prisoner of war camp. The sons wrote home about their experiences. Both returned home following the war.
8. Eng and Chang were the first Buddhists to enter America. This is documented by the Siamese Buddhist text that they brought with them into this country.
9. Eng and Chang remain the only conjoined twins to have children.
10. Chang developed pneumonia and died. Their physician had promised to separate them if one died. A son went to get the physician following Chang's death but did not get back in time. Eng died a few hours after Chang.
11. Sarah died on April 29, 1892. Sarah is not buried with the Twins at White Plains Baptist Church. She was buried in a cemetery with slaves and some of her children on Bunker property near the church.
12. Adelaide died at the age of 94 on May 21, 1917. At that time, the bodies of Eng and Chang were moved to the church cemetery and Adelaide was buried with them.
13. The bodies of Eng and Chang were autopsied in Philadelphia. Extensive data and photos of the autopsy are in the museum files. The livers of the Twins are on display at the museum demonstrating the nature of their connection.
14. Their last living child, Robert E. Bunker, died on January 25, 1951.
15. One grandchild of the twins is still living.

Recommended reading on the lives of the Siamese Twins: "The Two" by Irving and Amy Wallace; "The Lives of Chang and Eng: Siam's Twins in Nineteenth-Century America" by Joseph Orser; and "Duet for a Lifetime" by Kay Hunter. These are available in the Andy Griffith Museum gift shop and on Amazon.

2001. She enjoyed her visits to Mayberry Days each year so much that she decided to make Mount Airy her home. In 2007, Betty officially moved from the home where she had lived in Los Angeles for more than five decades and immediately became a beloved shining star in Mount Airy.

In 2012, Betty also received an actual star. She was in the distinguished inaugural group to have a star dedicated on the walkway at the entrance to the Andy Griffith Museum—just steps from this exhibit. Among her many other accolades through the years are a TV Land Legends Award and a star on the Missouri Walk of Fame. She is also the inspiration for the "You're the Cat's" Award, which recognizes those who have made significant contributions to the success of Mayberry Days.

During her first visit to Mayberry Days, Betty received the Key to the City of Mount Airy. Many years before that day, she had already earned the most precious key of all—the one to open the hearts not only of appreciative audiences, but also, most especially, of the thrilled fans always greeted with her welcoming smile.

Betty Lynn was not in Kansas City anymore, or even Hollywood. She was now right at home in Mount Airy, forever just a click of the heels from Mayberry.



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