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Lost Poetry Quotations

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Daffodils Little Rascals Poem

Posted by: Johnny SansCulo (---.nycmny83.covad.net)

Date: June 24, 2022 03:29PM

If anyone remembers the lines from the Daffodil Poem from the Little Rascals , let me know.

What little I remember is:

I went to pick the daffodil ? ? ? ? ? I tumbled down like Jack & Jill and skinned my little shin

and how Brisbane kept repeating "Learn that Poem"

Re: Daffodils Little Rascals Poem

Posted by: lg (---.trlck.ca.charter.com)

Date: June 24, 2022 04:12PM

Johnny, I'm not trying to discourage you, and I have no way of proving my statement. But back in the early years of television, the writers took great liberties in the dialogue. It is very possible, and think probable, that the part of the poem you heard in that episode is all that exists of it.

My guess is that it was written by whoever wrote the script.

Les

Re: Daffodils Little Rascals Poem

Posted by: Johnny SansCulo (---.nycmny83.covad.net)

Date: June 24, 2022 04:18PM

I agree with your assessment, Les. I didn't expect the poem to "be" from anywhere other than the Little Rascals, though one never knows

Alfalfa DID recite Charge of the Light Brigade, though (with firecrackers going off in his pants)

and Chubby WAS Julius Caesar (i think, he had a toga)

There's always hope !

Re: Daffodils Little Rascals Poem

Posted by: ilza (---.user.ajato.com.br)

Date: June 24, 2022 08:26PM

High above a daffodil I couldn't hardly reach it Said I to me I think I will Get it for my teacher I climbed to reach the daffodil Out on a limb so thin I tumbled down like Jack and Jill And skinned my little chin

Re: Daffodils Little Rascals Poem

Posted by: Johnny SansCulo (---.nycmny83.covad.net)

Date: June 25, 2021 10:12AM

Thank you ilza !

Re: Daffodils Little Rascals Poem

Posted by: ilza (---.user.ajato.com.br)

Date: June 25, 2021 11:00AM

you're welcome . the episode is Little Rascals Volume 04 Special Host: Leonard Maltin Includes: Readin' And Writin', Kid From Borneo, Sprucin' Up, Pay As You Exit Readin' and Writin' "Learn that poem... learn that poem..." is ringing in school-skipping Brisbane's head. Why is his conscience bothering him? Because he can't return to Miss Crabtree's class until he recites a sappy verse about picking daffodils. A lesson in laughter.

Re: Daffodils Little Rascals Poem

Posted by: lg (---.trck.ca.charter.com)

Date: June 25, 2021 02:46PM

Ilza does the cover of the video list the writers for the show? One of them is probably the author of the poem in question.

Les

Post Edited (06-25-04 14:20)

Re: Daffodils Little Rascals Poem

Posted by: Johnny SansCulo (---.nycmy83.covad.net)

Date: June 25, 2021 03:59PM

Les,

If you're asking for yourself, that's fine, but I really just needed the POEM itself.

I am "making" the people who work for me "learn that poem" It brightened up the office after a long week.

Thanks for asking on my behalf if that's what you were doing.

sorry

Posted by: ilza (---.user.ajato.com.br)

Date: June 25, 2021 04:40PM

I actually don't have the video so I fail to know whether the author is listed I doubt it, though ... who knows, maybe we will find it somehow

Re: Daffodils Little Rascals Poem

Posted by: J.H.SUMMERS (---.chartertn.net)

Date: June 25, 2021 10:57PM

Pay As You Exit...now that's entertainment.

john

Re: Daffodils Little Rascals Poem

Posted by: lg (---.trck.ca.charter.com)

Date: June 25, 2021 11:16PM

I was asking for myself Johnny. It got me curious as to how they picked "that" poem

Les

Re: Daffodils Little Rascals Poem

Posted by: JR (---.proxy.aol.com)

Date: March 01, 2022 08:14PM

High up grew a daffodil I couldn't hardly reach'er Said I to me, I think I will get it for my teacher.

I climbed to get the daffodil Out on a limb so thin I tumbled down Like Jack and Jill And skinned my little shin.

Re: Daffodils Little Rascals Poem

Posted by: PamS (63.166.226.---)

Date: March 14, 2022 05:21PM

I'm so happy you inquired about the poem, because it allowed me to find the volume of *The Little Rascals* I've been looking for. I want to give it to a co-worker who coordinates our company's annual American Cancer Society Daffodil Days program. For several days before the deadline to purchase, he walks around the office with (artificial) daffodils on his person. A couple in his pocket the first day, then gradually adding more and more each day until on the final day he has then coming out his socks, waistband, sleeves, head--you've got the picture. I thought he'd love a copy of the episode. Thanks.

Re: Daffodils Little Rascals Poem

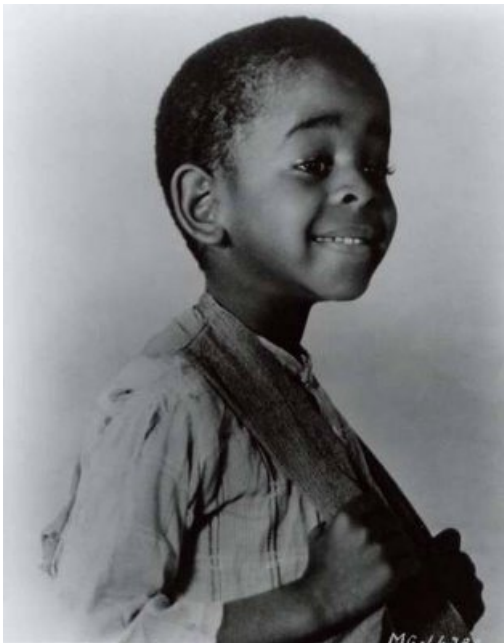
Posted by: Ed (---.sip.bct.bellsouth.net)

Date: April 19, 2022 07:24AM

There are a couple of more stanzas, but all I can remember is the last line, which is something like "I'm awful glad to meet 'cher (you)", and then Jack sticks out his hand to shake Miss Crabtree's. "Meet 'cher" obviously rhymes with teacher.

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"Learn That Poem, Learn That Poem"



I gave in to a fond indulgence: a DVD filled with Hal Roach's "Little Rascals" shorts, in all their cheerfully brutal glory, with enough nascent racism to make one squirm--but still enter laughing, buoyed by Stymie's doggedly insistent hunger that will never be sated, no matter how many sizzling frypans of eggs and ham or smorgasbord handouts--complete with Arty-choking artichokes and dog biscuits--or sagging sacks of candy--OK, here it comes: Yum, yum, eatumup--he can wolf down. Watching those long-gone children scampering around their nondescript edge-of-Hollywood early-morning locations--scraggly fields, stagnant ponds, dirt paths, alleys and culverts cluttered with handy brickbats suitable for bouncing off dog catchers' and truant officers' bald pates, and of course home to inexplicably available mules--I am once again filled with nervous excitement as they race between the legs of cruel adults, some of whom are actually armed, others merely squinting with Edgar Kennedy-esque certainty of delinquency; and I am filled as well with Stymie's hunger, broad and blatant, but real, even when he literally licks his lips in anticipation, because I understand the feeling: Anything--everything!--but mush.

When I was a kid myself, the Little Rascals were easily recognizable as real children, albeit inhabiting an idealized--or at least stylized--world, particularly because of their appetites: for food, of course, constantly, but also each other. They know how vital it is for children to, like good revolutionaries, hang together to avoid hanging separately. Exclusion from the gang is a bitter, tearful, panicky business; and their friendships demand a calm port after the storms of school and romance, capture and flight. While some adults extend affectionate or charitable hands--the nice ladies whose back porches Stymie approaches to beg for food, or shopkeepers and passers-by who indulge the children's whims--"borrowing" apples for an unsuccessful lesson in arithmetic (doomed to failure because of the apples' presence; they are, after all, food, not academic abstractions)--and of course the lovely Miss Crabtree, still the single most charismatic educator in film history (goodbye, Mr. Chips, you betcha)--most grownups in the Little Rascals world are active threats, far removed from the absolute values of childhood: appetite and loyalty.



The DVD I watched seemed determined to offer a thesis about those values: that they were best expressed in terms of the Rascals' relationships to dogs--particularly the phenomenal Petey, of course, but also a number of other crossbreeds tumbling around, fellow children--or at least creatures of the same world, pursued with ugly unrelenting violence by adults posing as dog catchers simply to make easier their acts of aggression in the War on Children. Petey is even featured in a weird silent short that chronicles in flashback his decision to commit suicide by hanging--assisted by a sympathetic fellow canine--in a telling turn of events, due to his master's betrayal. And true to form it's *cherchez la femme*, another appetite encountered--but the pursuit of the girl is an adult yearning; no wonder it spells doom. And Petey actually goes through with it, twisting at the literal end of his rope, but is rescued by his repentant master. If you want order--true, of a noisy sort, borne aloft by misunderstandings and a skewed child's-eye view, but order nonetheless--you have to turn your back on the adult world, or it can be lethal: Petey is gassed at the dog pound in another episode--and the fact that the gas canisters were empty does nothing to lessen the cruel extremes Hal Roach's series resorts to in order to test the absolutes that bind the Little Rascals.

The more I watch them, and the older I get--and doesn't that work out nicely?--I become convinced that, as stiff and formulaic as they are, these little films resonate. Yes, the Rascals are deeply caught up in bodily functions, material gain (Consider the truant wannabe, Brisbane, who, speaking out of the corner of his mouth--yet another Rascal visual trope--disdains his mother's plans for him to become President in favor of his own dream to become a street car conductor: "Boy, do they take in the nickels!" He listens to a hardworking man at his "grim forge" describing how he dutifully studied and was first in his class, all in the service of his own aspiration to reside in the White House. But as Brisbane observes with finality, "And you ended up a punk blacksmith."), and of course the joys of the chase. But they also seem to yearn for a perfected state, one that provides a justification for their appetites, a kind of vacant-lot-as-Pure-Form, a Rascal-ness, Professor, if you please, that places them out of the reach of starched shirts and outraged dowagers and allows them room to see the world as it is really is--or at least as they are always imagining it, which by the end of the second reel means a full belly, a safe pooch, and arms draped over each others' shoulders, as ready to give one another a kiss as a razzberry, in the safety and freedom of a partly hidden world at knee-level, little but not forlorn.



As Brisbane regrets his truancy, weeping as the Rascals often do--and not only because he has let down his mother and the radiant Miss Crabtree, but because, as an expelled student, he may be free but he is also divorced from the gang--he accepts his punishment: to recite a sickly sentimental poem, a rapturous ode to his teacher. He stands at the front of the room, torturously expelling the awful words, while the other kids howl their cleansing derision, drawing him back--and I don't think into simple conformity to adult authority, but to a far better place, where the clubhouse leans and Petey waits with Spanky--so fond of pointing out deviations from the Code of Loyalty with a sarcastic, drawn-out, "My pal"--and Stymie and Weezer and Farina, while that theme music, surprisingly plaintive, more goodbye than hello, reworks my childhood in its own grainy, mugging, double-take image.

LHC's Our Gang/Little Rascals Page

OUR GANG 1932

Readin' and Writin'... Free Eats... Spanky... Choo-Choo!... The Pooch... Hook and Ladder... Free Wheeling... Birthday Blues... A Lad An' A Lamp

READIN' AND WRITIN'

With: Stymie, Wheezer, Dorothy, Sherwood, Donald, Pete the Pup New to the Gang: Kendall "Breezy Brisbane" McComas, Carlana "Marmalade" Beard Notable adults: June Marlowe Directed by Robert F. McGowan Reviewed by JB

STORY: Breezy thinks going to school is pointless, and does everything he can to get expelled.



Kendall McComas, hereby known as his character name Breezy Brisbane, came from Mickey Rooney's Mickey McGuire series where he was known by the less euphonious name of Stinky Davis. Breezy was an obvious attempt at giving the Our Gang series a new leading man in the tradition of Mickey Daniels and Jackie Cooper, and a good choice he was too. Unfortunately for him, Roach soon discovered an even newer Our Gang member who would quickly become the focus of the series - 3-year-old Spanky McFarland. A few films later, Dickey Moore would be added to the cast as its leading man, and Breezy would quickly be gone. A shame, because like Jackie Cooper, Breezy made himself at home in the Our Gang world immediately. Although Readin' and Writin' is his first film with the Gang, he feels as if he has been with them for years. In this one film alone, he also contributes two deathless Our Gang catchphrases: his unforgettable wiseguy farewell to Miss Crabtree "So long, Crabby!" and his internal monologue mantra "Learn that poem.. learn that poem."

The film, centered at the schoolhouse, hearkens back to the classics Teacher's Pet and School's Out. There's a nice bit of internal continuity for a series not known for such things, in that, at "six years of old age", it is Wheezer, Stymie and Dorothy's first day of school. Naturally, that continuity is rendered meaningless by Miss Crabtree asking them their names, when she has clearly met them before in the series. With a three month hiatus between the last film and this one, all three kids are more confident in front of the camera, easily working their way through dialogue routines they would have stumbled over a year earlier. June Marlowe, as Miss Crabtree, seems to have picked up a few things from her years with the gang, pulling off a double-take that would make Jackie Cooper or Mary Ann Jackson proud. Even the unsung gang members that have suddenly appeared en masse brim with self-assurance, especially in the questions and answers section that is reminiscent of School's Out:

"Bobby, what is 2 and 1?" "Shoe polish." "What is 3 and 1?" "Oil." "No, darling, I don't you think you understand. Now, if a hen laid an egg hear, and I laid two here..." "Aw, I don't think you can do it!"

After Breezy ticks off Miss Crabtree one too many times, she gives him an ultimatum - recite the silly poem Sherwood's mother has written, or be expelled. He chooses expulsion. This leads to a forced climax in which Breezy, after being haunted by his conscience ("Learn that poem.. learn that poem..") comes crawling back and recites the poem in tears while the class laughs at him, and Marmalade brings in a skunk, effectively ending the school day. Despite this unconvincing finale, Readin' and Writin' is a memorable entry into the series, and a fine debut for the underrated Breezy Brisbane.

SO LONG, CRABBY! This was June Marlowe's last film as the beloved Miss Crabtree. Born Gisela Goetten, Marlowe was a silent movie actress and model. She got the part of Miss Crabtree by pure luck on a chance meeting with director Robert F. McGowan, and wore a blond wig for the part of at the suggestion of Hal Roach. She was featured with her natural brunette hair in Laurel and Hardy's first feature PARDON US. Marlowe had a relatively undistinguished movie career, but will always be remembered for her work in the Our Gang series. Although she only appeared in a few films with the kids, her sweet portrayal of Miss Crabtree makes her the first adult character fans will think of when they remember Our Gang. As Hal Roach said: "She was not a great actress; you just liked her, and that was enough."

MELODIES OLD AND NEW

In the background music, directly after the Our Gang theme "Good Old Days" comes a LeRoy Shield piece that brings back memories of my childhood every time I hear it. Titled "Little Dancing Girl", it was used so often in Our Gang films, it was burned into my brain as a child as I watched The Little Rascals on television. Instantly identifiable for its jaunty piano solo, "Little Dancing Girl" is my favorite piece of Shield music.

SMALL TALK

"What's your father doing?" "Twenty years!"

LEARN THAT POEM, LEARN THAT POEM

"The Daffodil Poem" (by Sherwood's Mother, as recited by Sherwood)

High up grew a daffodil, I couldn't hardly reach her
Said I to me I think I will get it for my teacher

I clumb to get the daffodil out on a limb so thin
I tumbled down like Jack and Jill and skinned my little shin

And here's the pretty daffodil I brought to my new teacher
I love her dear and I always will: I'm awful glad to meetcha!!

FREE EATS

With: Stymie, Wheezer, Breezy, Dorothy, Donald, Sherwood, Pete the Pup New to the Gang: George "Spanky" McFarland Notable adults: Billy

Gilbert, Paul Fix, Tiny Lawrence (fat midget), Major Mite (smaller midget) Directed by Raymond McCarey Reviewed by JB

STORY: Two midgets dressed as babies are stealing the jewelry at a rich woman's charity party for children, but only Stymie seems to realize it.



Following on the heels of *Dogs is Dogs* and *Readin' and Writin'*, *Free Eats* shows that the Our Gang comedies were still as good as ever. The addition of Breezy Brisbane took some of the load off of Wheezer and Stymie, the winpy but lovable Sherwood had come into his own in the two previous films, and Dorothy's blank stares and explosive takes (she does a great one at the sight of the fat midget) were always good for a couple of laughs each film. In addition, *Free Eats* would mark the introduction of young George McFarland, better known as Spanky. Coming into the series at age three, he would soon become the center of the Our Gang world, remaining so throughout the rest of the Roach series.

Free Eats features one of the most interesting adult casts that can be found in an Our Gang film. Billy Gilbert is the head of a bizarre crime gang which includes Paul Fix - in drag! - and two midgets dressed as the ugliest babies you will ever hope to see. Throughout the film, the "fidgets", as Stymie calls them, systematically make off with necklaces and pearls from the rich women at a charity party, while Stymie tries to convince the rest of the gang that they are not what they seem. There are few individual gags in the film, but things ride along nicely on the situations themselves, and the ever-amusing site of the midgets pretending to be babies. Directed by Raymond McCarey, brother of the more famous Leo, *Free Eats* may be an atypical Our Gang short, but it is a funny, unforgettable one.

GOOD OLD DAYS

In a fight to keep the "fidgets" from stealing from the safe, the fatter fidget pulls a gun. Young Spanky grabs it and spends much of the scene holding it, ready to fire. When he does, it turns out to be not a real gun... but a trick cigarette case!

SPANKY

With: Spanky, Breezy, Stymie, Wheezer, Dorothy, Sherwood, Pete the Pup New to the Gang: Tommy Bond Notable adults: Billy Gilbert Directed by Robert F. McGowan; Spanky's test footage directed by James W. Horne Reviewed by JB

STORY: Breezy and the Gang stage *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, while his father hides money in the wall and his baby brother Spanky hunts bugs with a hammer.

If the above summary of Spanky seems schizophrenic, that's because it is. As Leonard Maltin and Richard Bann theorize in their excellent and exhaustive *The Little Rascals: The Life and Times of Our Gang*, the film may have been scheduled as a story about the Gang putting on their version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but the discovery of Spanky led to a hasty rewrite. Thus, it is an average Our Ganger, torn between several ideas, each one of them getting short shrift.

Spanky's original test footage is spliced into the film, probably the opening scene where he babbles to a confused Petey about the picture books he is looking at. The scene shows Spanky to be an irresistibly cute little guy, but it doesn't bear up to repeated viewings. It's like watching home movies of somebody else's kids - cute once, maybe twice, and then you're looking around at the walls and hoping the phone will ring or something.

The production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is fairly good fun, though not hilarious. Sherwood camps it up as Aunt Ophelia, Dorothy's cough as Little Eva sounds like the roar of a flatulent lion thanks to a home-made device Wheezer manipulates offstage, and Stymie is cajoled into playing two parts - Uncle Tom and Topsy. Wheezer, who looks remarkably like comic Bobby Clark (or modern day comic Bill Irwin) introduces his character as "Mr. Marx". When asked by "Ophelia" if he is Groucho or Zeppo, he replies he is Harpo, and chases "Ophelia" around the stage. Like all good Our Gang stage productions, it features various foodstuffs hurled at the cast, with the main victim being Breezy, who plays Simon Legree.

Disappointing after three outstanding shorts, the problems of Spanky are understandable. Spanky McFarland was clearly talented and funny, and Roach wanted him in the shorts any way he could. Now he would have to find a way to better integrate this new member into the cast without throwing off the balance of the stories.

According to the Maltin-Bann book, Tommy Bond is in the cast somewhere, possibly in the opening scene described below. Bond would soon become an Our Gang regular, and after leaving the series, would return again, this time as Butch, the most famous Our Gang tough guy.

GOOD OLD DAYS

In the opening scene of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a cast of kids is dressed in blackface and are picking cotton while miming to a spiritual playing on a phonograph offstage.

CHOO-CHOO!

With: Spanky, Stymie, Wheezer, Breezy, Sherwood, Donald, Dorothy, Pete the Pup New to the Gang: Wally Albright, Harold "Bouncy" Wertz
Notable Adults: Del Henderson Directed by Robert F. McGowan Reviewed by JB

STORY: The Gang create havoc on a train.



Remarkably devoid of decent gags and solid laughs. It is simply not funny to present the Gang as a collection of brats who pull hair, start fights and punch people. Having said that, there are some points of interest:

(A) Spanky appears in the opening credits, saying "Hello, folks!" and giggling. Either Spanky was already the most popular rascal, or Roach was really pushing hard for him to become so.

(B) Sherwood's place as Our Gang's sissy is solidified when he happily exchanges clothes with Dorothy, wearing her dress and bow. Perhaps playing "Aunt Ophelia" in the previous film awakened something in him?

(C) In a strange disregard of continuity (so what else is new?), Dorothy is not even presented as one of the gang, but as a young girl with her mother on the train.

(D) Young Wally Albright appears in this film. He would later be one of Our Gang's leading men, most memorably as the rich kid with the snooty chauffeur in *Honky-Donkey*.

(E) This is as good a time as any to mention character actor Otto Fries, one of Our Gang's Most Valuable Adults. He was one of those Roach guys who played many characters for all the Roach series. Among other Our Gang characters, Fries played Joe Cobb's father in *Railroadin'*, Donald/Speck's father in *The First Seven Years*, the nice social worker in *Little Daddy*, and the detective in *Free Eats*. In *Choo-Choo!*, he plays a drunken novelty salesman. A few years later, he played the elevator operator in the Marx Brothers' *A NIGHT AT THE OPERA*, in which Groucho calls him by his actual first name.

(F) During the course of this tedious comedy, Fries, as the salesman, is licked in the face by a bear. When he yells in fright, it is not his own voice on the soundtrack, but that of Oliver Hardy!

THE POOCH

With: Stymie, Spanky, Breezy, Wheezer, Sherwood, Dorothy, Bouncy, Pete the Pup Special Guest Dog: Laughing Gravy Directed by Robert F. McGowan Reviewed by JB

STORY: After a day spent begging for food, Stymie must get five dollars or else Petey will be gassed by the dogcatcher.

After several disappointing Spanky-oriented shorts comes this wonderful showcase vehicle for Stymie. Despite the Chaplinesque setup, *The Pooch*, like most recent Our Gang films in general, has a sunny outlook on life. This new optimism is evident by the women Stymie begs food from. Rather than treat him harshly, like many adults from previous films would have done, both women are rather pleasant and easily give into Stymie's charms. There would be fewer gun-toting farmers and evil stepmothers on the horizon, although the film does have a nasty dogcatcher who attempts to gas Petey, a jarring turn of events for such a happy, fun little film.

The use of Spanky as Stymie's sidekick is inspired. It allowed Spanky to be showcased, but not to hog footage. Even at this young age, he proved to be excellent at dialogue, and his running conversations with Stymie are among the film's highlights. As well, the cutaway shots of him running after Stymie (Our Gang was still consistently using silent footage in many of their action sequences) are funny and adorable.

HOOK AND LADDER

With: Spanky, Stymie, Breezy, Sherwood, Dorothy, Bouncy, Pete the Pup New to the Gang: Dickie Moore Directed by Robert F. McGowan Reviewed by JB

STORY: The Gang run a makeshift firehouse and wait for a real fire.

A solid comedy based on a surefire premise, Hook and Ladder features good dialogue, fine slapstick and elaborate mechanical gags. But there is a generic Mack Sennett quality to the film stemming from the non-exploitation of the talents and established characters of most of the players. With the exception of Dickie, Spanky and Stymie, all the other gang members come off as placeholders, characters written into the film just to have a gang. Breezy has devolved from the tough wiseguy who brings in a mule to school to a good little citizen who proudly tells the authorities "The paper said to help the fire department!". Sherwood was developing into a fun little character good for incidental business (and occasional cross-dressing), but he too is just another "fireman" filling out a bed. Dorothy smells a rotten egg and gets a face full of white powder and doesn't even get to do one of her patented takes. Wheezer, whose devilish personality has recently been replaced with no personality at all, isn't even here. And Bouncy? Who's Bouncy? In the shorts that came before, two or three kids would handle the main story, and other gang members would be highlighted in little vignettes, so that you got to know and love all the gang. At this time in the series, it was basically Dickie, Stymie and Spanky who took charge, and the rest of the gang might as well have been The Keystone Cops for all the individuality they show. This generification of the Gang would continue until the later Spanky and Alfalfa years, when the Gang was trimmed down to just a handful of characters, all of them with distinct personalities.

Dickey Moore, an appealing kid, is now the Gang's leading man, and, at least for this film, Spanky's older brother. As fire chief, his main duties are making sure everybody snores like real firemen, and getting Assistant Chief Spanky to take his worm medicine. He acquits himself nicely on both counts.

Despite my criticisms above, Hook and Ladder is a funny, fast-paced and creative comedy with expertly executed gags and witty dialogue.

P.S. There is a new Petey in town. His ring is now around his other eye.

P.P.S. This was Sherwood "Spud" Bailey's final Our Gang film. One of those underrated Our Gang players not often praised by fans, Sherwood was integral to at least two classic Our Gang films: Dogs is Dogs and Readin' and Writin'.

SMALL TALK

"I can't get the assistant chiefs pants on!"

MORE SMALL TALK

"Remember, men: we're volume-teers. We don't get no pay." "What's that, no pay? How come?" "I don't want any pay. Do you, Breezy?" "Nuh-uh. All I wanna do is squirt water."

FREE WHEELING

With: Dickey, Stymie, Breezy, Dorothy New to the Gang: Jacquie Lyn Directed by Robert F. McGowan Reviewed by JB

STORY: The doctor says Dickie needs excitement in his life, and a ride in the Gang's donkey-powered taxi proves to be just the thing.

Another bright, cheerful comedy with more of an emphasis on personality than on pure gags. Dickie is cast as the rich kid in town who is pampered against his will by his mother. Some unnamed affliction makes Dickie unable to move his head (that is, when actor Dickie remembers character Dickie is supposed to have a stiff neck) and he is tended to by a round-the-clock nurse. Both the doctor and Dickie's father feel the boy will only get better if he gets our and "roughs it up" a little bit, but his mother adamantly refuses to heed their advice. Enter Stymie, who offers him a ride in the Gang's taxi, and, within seconds, cures his stiff neck by a quick turn of his head.

Over the past few films, the realism of the Our Gang world has been giving way to a new sunny optimism and a reliance on funny gimmicks (midgets, an elaborate firehouse, the gang's cab). The runaway cab sequence in this film takes the Gang out of the real world completely, thanks to horribly obvious back projection work. It hurts this film less than it hurts similar bad effects in Laurel and Hardy's County Hospital, but it is still disconcerting to see.

Speaking of Laurel and Hardy, Spanky now has his own sidekick, cute little Jacquie Lyn, whom Laurel and Hardy fans will remember from their feature PACK UP YOUR TROUBLES. She would only be around for a handful of Our Gang films.

SMALL TALK

"The Natural Broadcasting Sister. Tony Rollins speaking. Is you lissnin'?"

BIRTHDAY BLUES

With: Dickie, Spanky, Stymie, Jacque, Cotton, Dorothy, Donald, Pete the Pup New to the Gang: Bobbie "Cotton" Beard Directed by Robert F. McGowan Reviewed by JB

STORY: To buy a dress for his mother's birthday, Dickie holds a bake sale.

A consistently amusing and touching comedy, Birthday Blues is memorable mostly for the gigantic square cake filled with prizes and baked by the gang, a confection which is so unstable, it throbs and bubbles and threatens to explode, and makes a noise best transcribed as "Mweeeep-MMwowwwww". Birthday Blues also contains this classic exchange between Dickie and Spanky, when Spanky suggests buying Mom a gun for her birthday:

"Aw, what' would she do with a gun?" "Shoot Papa!"

The message behind Birthday Blues is kids should be allowed to be kids. You could say that is the message of the entire series, and it is a message we too often forget in these jaded times.

Yet another Beard joins the Gang, this time Stymie's young sibling Bobbie as "Cotton". And this would be Kendall "Breezy Brisbane" McComas's last Our Gang film. He would return to the Mickey McGuire series to once again portray Stinky Davis.

GOOD OLD DAYS

When Stymie takes the recipe directions "Set on stove" a bit too literally, he wipe the sweat off his brow. With a flick of his hand, the sweat lands up on the wall in an ugly stream of black dots. I can normally rationalize away racial gags in old movies, and the ones in Our Gang tended to be innocent, but this one is inexcusable.

A LAD 'AN A LAMP

With: Stymie, Spanky, Dickie, Cotton, Wheezer, Dorothy, Donald, Pete the Pup, Jigs the Chimp Directed by Robert F. McGowan Reviewed by JB

STORY: Spanky thinks that Cotton has been turned into a chimpanzee by a genie.

As I mention in my review of Birthday Blues, I can usually rationalize away racial gags in old movies, accepting them as simply part of the standard humor of the times. But in A Lad 'an a Lamp, I just have to give up trying. Spanky wishing Cotton was a monkey is innocent enough, but the line "All he needs is a tail" just doesn't fly these days. Stymie wishing for a watermelon once is fine, but repeating it over and over, along with wishes for fried chicken and that his daddy be let out of jail.. Whatever happened to the gag writers who could come up with things like "The Ham and Eggs Story" for Stymie? What makes it worse is that the story is one big contrivance after another just so they can "turn" little Cotton into a monkey for some cute scenes with Spanky. There had to be an easier way to set Spanker up with Jiggs the Chimp. A later Roach short, Three Smart Boys, in which Spanky and Alfalfa think Buckwheat has been turned into a monkey, is much more plausible, without the disparaging racial overtones of the "all he needs is a tail" variety.

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