

# CAR 54

*Where Are You?*

by Martin Grams, Jr.

Car 54 Where Are You?

© 2009 Martin Grams, Jr. All Rights Reserved.

All illustrations are copyright of their respective owners, and are also reproduced here in the spirit of publicity. Whilst we have made every effort to acknowledge specific credits whenever possible, we apologize for any omissions, and will undertake every effort to make any appropriate changes in future editions of this book if necessary.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopying or recording, except for the inclusion in a review, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published in the USA by:  
BearManor Media  
P O Box 71426  
Albany, Georgia 31708  
[www.bearmanormedia.com](http://www.bearmanormedia.com)

ISBN 1-59393-340-1

Printed in the United States of America.

Book and cover design by Darlene Swanson of Van-garde Imagery, Inc.

## *Was There Going to Be A "Car 54" Spin-Off?*

Very little information has been uncovered on the proposed *Car 54* spin-off (featuring the character of Patrolman Wallace, as played by series regular Fred O'Neal). The only tangible evidence of this concept is the following letter to Nat Hiken from George Norford of the National Broadcasting Company. It is dated May 4, 1962:

Dear Nat:

It is heartening to have your interest and support in developing a "Car 54 . . ." program that will feature Wallace and later serve as a pilot for the contemplated series involving his family.

Basic to the whole effort is your understandable concern that the pilot script do justice to the high humor and hilarity that are hallmarks of your series, while at the same time show enough of the Wallace family in their own environment to excite interest in the possibilities of a series involving them.

You know broadly my contemplated approach to the material, having read the script I have developed and the outlines suggested for future shows in the projected series. With your expert knowledge of what will sell in the TV market, you can determine what must be done to give this first script the charge it must have to make the necessary impact and stir the necessary interest.

With this advice and assistance from you I can whip the script into the shape required for inclusion in your series. At the same time I hope to invest it with enough of the Wallace family flavor to suggest where a series based on their life can lead. How much of the program should be devoted to the Wallace family is, of course, something we shall have to establish.

We share the conviction that television and the national

audience have reached the level where such a “Car 54 . . .” program and such a series, properly executed can rouse a critical and commercial acceptance of great size. At the same time, like you, I am also convinced that the first introduction of this family, in the context of your service must have the tender, loving care and the expert handling to make sure that this acceptance is attained. Your interest in the project is the best sort of insurance a man can have to guarantee this happy result. It is an interest that I trust will continue far beyond the pilot phase.

I have the happy feeling that television and its audience at home and subsequently abroad, will remember for a long time to come, and with the fondest regard those associated with this pioneering venture.

I am looking forward to our meeting on Monday, May 14, at which time I hope to discuss the foregoing with you as well as our respective interests in this property from the proprietary and financial standpoints and in terms of my services as writer of the pilot.

Sincerely,  
George Norford

### ***Memorandum to All Departments***

The following are letters written to members of the cast and production during filming. They reveal an insight to the series and the production.

August 7, 1962

Memorandum to All Departments

From: Sal Scoppa

*It is the policy of Eupolis Productions, Inc., and will be the policy for the future, to permit visitors on the set. However, in order not*

*to crowd the set and possibly interfere with shooting, it is requested that anyone desiring visitors on the set should first submit names and dates to Sal Scoppa, so that the [number] of visitors on the set for any given day can be properly controlled. This, we hope, will result in more enjoyment for the visitors and will not make it difficult for the shooting.*

November 2, 1962

Memorandum to the Regular Members of the Cast

From: Arthur A. Hershkowitz

*Every Monday the production, at its own cost, provides a barber to give haircuts and/or trims to the regular members of our cast. It is imperative that each regular member make arrangements with the barber to have the work done during the hours of 12:30 and 3 p.m. Please co-operate by having your hair cut every Monday.*

### ***The Emmy Awards***

The Emmy Awards—honoring programs telecast between April 16, 1961 and April 14, 1962—were held at the Hollywood Palladium, the Astor Hotel in New York, and the Sheraton-Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. Broadcast over NBC, the awards ceremony was, as usual, a star-studded affair. To be nominated for the award was indeed an honor, but the night did not look so grand for *Car 54, Where Are You?* It lost to *The Bob Newhart Show* for “Outstanding Program Achievement in the Field of Humor.” Nat Hiken, Tony Webster and Terry Ryan lost to Carl Reiner (*The Dick Van Dyke Show*) for “Outstanding Writing Achievement in Comedy.” But the big moment came when Lucille Ball came out on stage to present the award for “Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Comedy.” Nat Hiken won the statuette for his efforts on *Car 54, Where Are You?*, beating out John Rich for *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and Seymour Berns for *The Red Skelton Show*.

On May 26, 1963, the annual Emmy Awards came up again and Nat Hiken only won one nomination for the *Car 54* series. It was for “Outstanding Writing Achievement in Comedy.” For the second year in a row, Hiken lost out again to Carl Reiner for *The Dick Van Dyke Show*.

### *Summer Publicity*

In June of 1962, Joe E. Ross and Fred Gwynne shared the spotlight with Gene Krupa’s Quartet at Freedomland’s Moon Bowl.

On June 3, 1962, the newspaper comic strip “Pottsy,” featured a seven-panel strip in which the title character, a patrolman, observes the filming of *Car 54* and races over to the patrol car to meet Muldoon and Toody, asking “All right, you guys, lemme have your operator’s license!”

According to tax returns for Eupolis Productions, Inc., the total income generated by the first season’s worth of *Car 54* television episodes, (including summer reruns up to Aug. 31, 1962, merchandising fees, personal appearance fees, and space and facilities rental) was \$2,070,877.74.

### *Car 54 Day*

On Sept. 16, 1962, Joseph F. Periconi, President of the Borough of the Bronx, issued a proclamation declaring the 16<sup>th</sup> of Sept., 1962 as “Car 54 Day,” and urged the citizens “to share in the enjoyment of the wonderful world returning to us this Sunday evening with Officers Toody and Muldoon and their fellow officers.”

According to the proclamation:

WHEREAS: the role of our Police Officer has often been portrayed from drab routine to incredible dangers with emphasis on the Officer’s martinet-like disassociation from the community in which he is assigned; and

WHEREAS: in fact it is those Officers who have identified and involved themselves with the communities they serve who have contributed most to making The Bronx a better place in which to live; and

WHEREAS: Officers Toody and Muldoon and their fellow officers in *Car 54, Where Are You?* have brought into the homes of The Bronx and the rest of the nation a picture of Police Officers with all the warmth and humor we identify with the Police Officer who guided us across our first grade school crossing.

### *The Second Season*

The timing could not have been better - because the premiere of the second season of *Car 54* aired over NBC-TV that evening, with an episode entitled "Hail to the Chief!" Critics, though, remained divided about the show's intrinsic merit.

Columnist Leo Burnett reviewed the season opener in the Wednesday, Sept. 19, 1962 issue of *Variety*: "*Car 54's* second tour of duty initialed with laughs generously planted, but the so-so story on the opener suggests the same format and general plot liner of last season . . . Scripter Tony Webster seized on a premise pregnant with yucks . . . Some of the gags were obvious, but there were enough snappy lines and some solid performances to serve the session with its needed lift . . ."

For the first season, Nat Hiken wrote virtually all 30 scripts himself, but the pressure of time and his desire to put more effort into direction (for which he had won an Emmy) now forced him to bring in other writers for season two. In addition to producing and directing the first season episodes, he took on almost every job but acting. (In one episode, when Hiken needed a pencil sketch in a hurry for one scene, he made it himself.)

For the second season, Hiken took on Billy Friedberg as chief

loves to go to court so he can argue about his rights . . . and demands the ticket.

**Trivia, etc.** There is a line delivered in this episode, “This is a police report, not a script for Milton Berle,” was actually an in-joke. Nat Hiken had been a writer for Berle’s radio program in the late 1940s.

While it was not intended to be the series opener, this episode introduces the police officers that would appear frequently on the program, including Officers O’Hara, Nicholson and Wallace. The second half of this episode concerns Toody and Muldoon’s attempt not to give a ticket to a citizen for a traffic violation, so they can avoid going to traffic court and, hence, be off work the day they are scheduled to take a ride on a yacht for a little sword fishing. The interplay with words between the police officers and the citizen, and other police officers who arrive on the scene, is reminiscent of old vaudeville sketches. The Battle Creek, Michigan, *Enquirer and News* reported: “There’s one particularly funny scene showing a wayward motorist vainly pleading for a ticket. Though it’s not a driving technique recommended to all viewers of this program, it does get the required guffaws.”

*Variety* reviewed the series opener: “If Nat Hiken disciplines himself (and it’s a pretty safe bet, based on past performance, that he’ll find the remedy), it’s still possible that *Car 54 - Where Are You?* can emerge as a funny lampoon on the men in blue.”

## **Production #1 “SOMETHING NICE FOR SOL”**

Copyright Notice: Eupolis Productions, Inc. © September 24, 1961; LP21511

Filmed: Monday to Friday, January 16 - 20, and Monday, January 23, 1961.

Initial Telecast: September 24, 1961

Mimeo script, dated August 23, 1961

Teleplay scripted by Nat Hiken.

Directed by Al Di Caprio

**Cast:** Gene Baylos (*Habidashery Harry*); Tony Carrado (*the poolroom proprietor*); Mildred Clinton (*Sandra*); Mark Dawson (*Corbett*); Diane Deering (*Dowager*); Duke Farley (*the policeman*); Janet Fox (*the mother*); Bryant Fraser (*the boy*); Nathaniel Frey (*Abrams*); Mike Gorrin (*the painter*); Jerome Guardino (*Officer Antonnucci*); Fred Gwynne (*Officer Francis Muldoon*);

Albert Henderson (*Officer Steinmetz*); Gerald Hiken (*Webster*); George Kane (*Officer Murdock*); Dave Kurlan (*Officer Kissel*); Judith Lowery (*woman in store*); Charles Mayer (*the store proprietor*); Harold Norman (*Reilly*); Elba Ocampo (*the Spanish woman*); Fred O'Neal (*Officer Wallace*); Paul Reed (*Captain Paul Block*); Joe E. Ross (*Gunther Toody*); Nipsey Russell (*Officer Anderson*); Joseph Warren (*Dubrow*); and Bernie West (*Harry*).

**Plot:** Toody has been voted in as head of the Brotherhood Club. His first act is to help the men decide what to get Sgt. Abrams, who is about to celebrate his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the force. At first they decide on a gold watch, but there isn't enough money. Then they decide to get him an identification bracelet, but he already has one. Finally, Toody hits upon the perfect idea: a pair of orthopedic shoes. After all, Abrams has problems with his feet, hence the reason he is a desk sergeant. But when Toody and Muldoon discover that orthopedic shoes have to be custom made, the challenge isn't getting hold of Abrams old pair of shoes - it's getting a plaster mold made without the sergeant suspecting anything . . .

**Trivia, etc.** The character of desk clerk Kissel was originally going to be played by actor Lou Polan. Dave Kurlan played the role for the pilot, but when it came time to film the series as a regular, Kurlan was unable to commit, so Bruce Kirby took over and stayed on as Kissel for the entire series. This was also the only episode George Kane played the role of Officer Murdock. Shelley Burton played the role throughout the rest of the series. Albert Henderson played Officer Steinmetz in this episode - Joe Warren played the character for the duration of the series.

Gerald Hiken, who played the role of Webster in this episode, was producer/director/writer Nat Hiken's real-life cousin. Gerald had the recurring role of Mr. Katz, the butcher in Sector 3 (the section Muldoon and Toody patrol) in a number of episodes. Gerald Hiken would, years later, be nominated for a "Best Actor" Tony Award in 1980 for his role on Broadway's *Strider*.

The June 28, 1961 issue of *Variety* discussed the series briefly, months before its official premiere. The pilot film was previewed and one critic commented that the plot made "for some of the most hilarious sequences TV has ever seen. And it matters not a whit to us that such a situation would happen in real life about once a millennium."

**Talent Fees:** The pilot was produced separately from the regular series, and

for all intents and purposes, was a separate production. For example, while Nathaniel Frey was paid \$500 for his role of Sgt. Abrams in this episode, when it came time to sign up as a recurring character, he was paid \$315 for each episode filmed thereafter. Gerald Hiken was paid \$500 for his appearance as Webster in the pilot; when appearing in the recurring role of Mr. Katz, the butcher in future episodes, his salary was \$315 per episode. The talent fees for the pilot episode are listed below and reflect only what the actors were paid for this episode, not the rest of the series:

Nipsey Russell \$225	Gene Abydos \$650
Mildred Clinton \$315	Mark Dawson \$420
Nathaniel Frey \$500	Gerald Hiken \$500
Paul Reed \$350	Albert Henderson \$315
George Kane \$315	Hal Norman \$315
Fred O'Neal \$315	Bernie West \$500

### **Production #3 “HOME SWEET SING SING”**

Copyright Notice: Eupolis Productions, Inc. © October 1, 1961; LP21512

Rehearsal: none

Filmed: Thursday to Wednesday, July 20, 21, and 24 - 26, 1961

Mimeo script dated August 6, 1961

NBC Review: July 14, 1961

Initial Telecast: October 1, 1961

Teleplay scripted by Terry Ryan and Nat Hiken.

Directed by Nat Hiken.

**Cast:** Gene Baylos (*Benny*); Edwin Bruce (*the nephew*); Shelley Burton (*Officer Murdock*); Mildred Clinton (*Mrs. Abrams*); Nathaniel Frey (*Abrams*); Hank Garrett (*Officer Ed Nicholson*); Jerome Guardino (*Officer Antonnucci*); Fred Gwynne (*Officer Francis Muldoon*); Al Henderson (*Officer O'Hara*); Ruth Masters (*Mrs. Muldoon*); George McCoy (*the detective*); Fred O'Neal (*Officer Wallace*); Beatrice Pons (*Lucille Toody*); Paul Reed (*Captain Block*); Joe E. Ross (*Gunther Toody*); Nipsey Russell (*Officer Anderson*); and Michael Vale (*Klein*).

**Plot:** “Backdoor Benny” is released from prison and, fulfilling his promise from years before, he pays Toody a visit for a chance of rehabilitation. Benny, however, has developed habits such as sleeping in a room with

minimum furniture, walking the yard and asking for his letters to be censored. Longing for the life he had behind bars with his friends, Benny gains their confidence long enough to pull a job and get arrested. Down at the station, he enthusiastically gives a full confession, complete with fingerprints. His multiple attempts fail when Muldoon and Toody discover his motive, and do what they can to prevent him from going back to prison. Benny, though, is one step ahead: He has stolen Captain Block's watch, which will surely land him a place in prison.

**Trivia, etc.** In the opening scene, Toody comments, "Sergeant Abrams! Guess who we stopped for speeding! Rocky Graziano! Did you hear me? Rocky Graziano! He was heading for . . ." Originally the script referenced Mickey Mantle. NBC's legal department, however, advised Nat Hiken's office that unless Hiken could secure a release from Mantle, the ball player's name should not be used. Arthur Hershkowitz, the script contact for the series, talked to Hiken, who was close friends with Rocky Graziano from the television series *The Martha Raye Show*, and contacted a representative of Graziano. With permission, they made the substitution.

**More Trivia, etc.** Gene Baylos is listed as "Special Guest" in opening credits.

## **Production #2 "CHANGE YOUR PARTNER"**

Copyright Notice: Eupolis Productions, Inc. © October 8, 1961; LP21513

Filmed: Thursday to Tuesday, July 13, 14, 17 and 18, 1961

Initial Telecast: October 8, 1961

Final draft dated July 7, 1961.

Teleplay scripted by Tony Webster and Nat Hiken.

Directed by Nat Hiken.

**Cast:** Arthur Anderson (*clerk #1*); Beatrice Pons (*Lucille Toody*); Shelley Burton (*Officer Murdock*); Duke Farley (*clerk #2*); Dan Frazer (*Bradley*); Nathaniel Frey (*Abrams*); Hank Garrett (*Johanson*); Bruce Glover (*Reilly*); Jim Gormley (*Officer Nelson*); Jerome Guardino (*Officer Antonucci*); Fred Gwynne (*Officer Francis Muldoon*); Al Henderson (*Officer O'Hara*); Phil Kennedy (*Benton*); Bruce Kirby (*Hamilton*); Ruth Masters (*Mrs. Muldoon*); Fred O'Neal

(*Officer Wallace*); Paul Reed (*Captain Paul Block*); Joe E. Ross (*Gunther Toody*); Nipsey Russell (*Officer Anderson*); and Joe Warren (*Officer Steinmetz*).

**Plot:** Most patrolmen paired together last about nine months on average before they request re-assignment. Wondering why Toody and Muldoon have spent the past nine years together without a single request of transfer, Captain Block plants a notion in their heads that causes the men to request new partners. After a week of re-assignments, most of the men in the precinct demand the Captain assign the two back together again.

**Trivia, etc.** This episode was supposed to be a three-day shoot, but filming took a day longer than scheduled, causing the production to complete on Tuesday instead of Monday. Paul Reed was paid \$450 for the three days he was needed. Dan Frazer was paid \$250 for the three days he was needed.

### **Production #5 “I WON’T GO”**

Copyright Notice: Eupolis Productions, Inc. © October 15, 1961; LP21514  
Filmed: Thursday, Friday, Monday and Tuesday, July 27, 28, 31 and August 1, 1961

Initial Telecast: October 15, 1961

Teleplay scripted by Gary Belkin and Nat Hiken.

Directed by Nat Hiken.

**Cast:** Milo Boulton (*O’Malley*); Matt Crowley (*Brady*); Fred Gwynne (*Officer Francis Muldoon*); Douglas Herrick (*the grandfather*); Will Hussung (*Benton*); Dave Kerman (*Berger*); Al Lewis (*Mr. Spencer*); Vincent Lynch (*the boy*); Mona Moore (*Mary Henderson*); John O’Leary (*Carmody*); Molly Picon (*Mrs. Bronson*); Paul Reed (*Block*); Joe E. Ross (*Gunther Toody*); Maurice Shrog (*Ellison*); and Van Dexter (*Birchfield*).

**Plot:** Toody and Muldoon (along with representatives of practically every other city department) are asked to do what they can to “encourage” sweet little old Mrs. Bronson to leave her old, city-owned brownstone so that it can be removed to make way for a new approach to the George Washington Bridge. She has been served a number of summonses, but she refuses to budge, and they hate to forcibly evict her for fear of incurring the wrath of the various “citizens’ committees” who make front-page headlines of such

situations. Toody and Muldoon finally question Mrs. Bronson, and ask her why she refuses to move. Winning her confidence, she explains that she is waiting for her runaway dog to come home. The officers search the city and find him alive and well, and Mrs. Bronson goes happily to a new residence.

**Trivia, etc.** Throughout the series, there was the realism of life in a politician's play land, the big city. In this episode, when apartment buildings were condemned to make way for a new approach to the George Washington Bridge, during an election year, Mrs. Bronson refused to move. Offering coffee and cake to Toody, Muldoon and various process servers, Mrs. Bronson explained the delicate truth: "They wouldn't put a nice grandmother in the street. In an election year with the Democrats worried about the Bronx, especially they wouldn't put a nice Jewish grandmother in the street." These lines had to get by P&G's censor - an ad man who kept a sponsor's eye on *Car 54* scripts - and they didn't go unnoticed.

Salley DeMay was a stand-in for actress Molly Picon (who was listed in the opening credits as "Special Guest") during the first two days of filming. Though the name of the dog with Mr. Finkelstein was called "Prince," Mrs. Bronson refers to the pooch as "Queenie." The dog's real name (off-screen) was Queenie.

Al Lewis, who was then in the Broadway hit musical *Do Re Mi*, was cast in the relatively brief role of a construction foreman, and was paid \$225 for his appearance in this episode. His classic delivery of his tag line "Arrivederci Mrs. Bronson" made such a hit that Hiken was determined to write Lewis in as a regular on the series. The role turned out to be that of Officer Leo Schnauser, the sergeant who was permanently perched on the brink of hysteria.

This episode was supposed to be a three-day shoot, but ran over an extra day. Actor John Garrett O'Leary was paid \$225 the same for his appearance in this episode. Paul Reed was paid \$450 for the three days he was needed.

## **Production #6 "MULDOON'S STAR"**

Copyright Notice: Eupolis Productions, Inc. © October 22, 1961; LP21515

Rehearsal: Friday, August 11, 1961

Filmed: Monday to Wednesday, August 14 - 16, 1961

Initial Telecast: October 22, 1961