

# White, Betty (1922-) Encyclopedia Article

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## White, Betty (1922—)

Betty White was one of the first women to form her own television production company, and she also became one of TV's best-loved performers, whether her character was sweetly innocent or a harridan. Her early roles ranged from girl-next-door (*Life with Elizabeth*, 1952-1955) to screwball wife (*Date with the Angels*, 1957-1958), but it was as a man-crazy schemer on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* from 1973 to 1977 that White won her first major popularity. For her portrayal of the predatory Sue Ann Nivens, White won back-to-back best supporting actress Emmys (1975/1976), even though she appeared in less than half the episodes in any given season. After *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* ended, White briefly hosted a game show called *Just Men!* and became the only female to win an Emmy as best game-show host (1983). Two years later White returned to episodic television in the phenomenal hit *The Golden Girls* (1985-1992), in which she portrayed naive Rose Nyland, who never quite had the same conversation as those to whom she was talking and who often added seemingly unrelated comments dealing with life in her rural hometown, St. Olaf. A comedy that often placed the women in outlandish situations, the series showed that older women could have active lives, and it helped to weaken the "ageism" that had been a hallmark of American culture. In 1994 White became the tenth woman to be inducted into the Television Hall of Fame.

### Further Reading:

O'Dell, Cary. *Women Pioneers in Television*. Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland & Company, 1997.

White, Betty. *Here We Go Again: My Life in Television*. New York, Scribner, 1995.