

# Nisei Morita to Star In TV Comedy Series

**HOLLYWOOD (UPI)** — "How do you make a Jap funny?"

The question was asked by Pat Morita, the Japanese-American comedian who will star in "Mr. T and Tina," a television series that is breaking new ground by starring an Asian.

Morita's question was serious. As a stand-up comic his humor is strictly American. He knows little if anything about Japanese humor.

Considerably under medium height, Morita is a watch-charm of a man who chuckles a great deal. He has a wispy mustache and a receding hairline.

As a Nisei (a second generation Japanese-American), Pat Morita is more American than Archie Bunker. In the series he plays an old-country Japanese newly arrived on these shores.

Wearing a funky hat, a T-shirt, on which a giant clam other day and wondered how

was stenciled, and chinos, Pat sipped a can of fruit juice the viewers would take to an Asian hero.

"Nowadays it's popular to call us Asians instead of Orientals," he said. "What's the difference. Why not Japs or Nips? It doesn't matter to me.

"If blacks can be called blacks, why can't they call us yellows?"

A nightclub comedian for more than a dozen years, Morita was seen last season as Arnold, the owner of the drive-in hangout for the kids in the highly rated "Happy Days" series.

Over the years Pat has had his ups — playing "The Hollywood Palace" — and his downs — playing third-rate clubs in the Catskills.

Pat speaks unblemished English. Until this series came along he couldn't fake a native Japanese trying to speak American English.

In order to star as "Mr. T" he developed a Japanese accent with the aid of Mel Blanc.

"About four years ago I was playing the Copa in New York and tried an old-country accent," he said. "On opening night Bill Dana told me I had the worst Jap accent he ever heard. And what does Dana know? He's Hungarian.

"My brother can read and write Japanese and speak the language too. I can understand it pretty well, but I can barely make myself understood in Japanese. I guess I'm the yellow sheep of the family."

As Mr. T, Morita will play an immigrant widower with a couple of young daughters. The "Tina" in the title is an attractive governess for his little girls.

Morita describes his character as a sort of inept swinger, a genius inventor who somehow just misses when he tries to blend into the American culture.

"He's taken a Berlitz course in English and is willing to jump into the mainstream of American life," Pat said. "But he messes up.

"His problem is that he tries to enforce old-country customs and manners for the kids in a new environment. But they take to American life right away.

"Mr. T would like to hang in there with the Samurai code and keep women in their place, but he can't handle it."

The incongruity of the situation provides the show's humor. Morita said there are no racial messages or subtle pleas for social justice.

"I've never tried to be a spokesman for the Japanese in this country. Or in the old country either. I don't think much in terms of race. Being part of a minority is no burden for me.

"When I'm in Japan everybody knows I'm an American. That's no burden either.

"This looks like a funny show to me and that's all it's supposed to be. We showed the pilot to a lot of Japanese here in Los Angeles — which has the largest Japanese population in the country — and they loved it.

"They fell down laughing. They could see themselves in the same situations.

"Then we had some friends from Japan look at it and they cracked up. Our only problem showing the series in Japan will be in the translation."

Morita hasn't had to worry about making the transition from stand-up comic to sitcom actor.

"The transition was made easier because we tape our show in front of a live audience," he explained. "It's something like working in a club.

"And I learned a lot from 'Happy Days.' I still can't believe what happened to me on that show. I appeared in only 16 episodes and became a hero to the kids in this country.

"I can't go anywhere now without being recognized as Arnold."

With luck, Morita may find a new bunch of admirers who think of him as Mr. T.



## BY TOM CAMPBELL ON THE SCENE

By TOM CAMPBELL

Jackie Wilson was one of the hottest record artists of the late 1950s and early '60s. Everything he recorded was a best-seller.

"Lonely Teardrops," his most-remembered hit, came in 1958, a year after Wilson left Billy Ward's Dominoes to do a solo act. One of the first soul artists to make a complete and successful crossover to rock surveys, he was responsible for one smash hit after another — "A Woman, A Lover, A Friend," "Baby Work Out," "Nothing But Heartaches," "Respect," "For Your Precious Love," "For Once in My Life," and dozens of others.

In 1961, Wilson was 26 years old. He was shot and critically wounded by a woman who, according to published accounts of his early career, was described as "a fan." Jackie Wilson survived the episode.

Last year, while performing with a Dick Clark Rock 'n Roll Revival show at New York's Latin Casino, Wilson collapsed. A heart attack and brain injury kept him in a coma for months. At the time, doctors were fearful he might never recover to live a normal life and a few months ago litigation began to determine a guardian to watch over Wilson's business affairs.

Today, while doctors are still in doubt regarding whether or not Jackie Wilson will recover to resume his career, friends are planning benefits to help pay the mounting medical bills. According to current medical reports Jackie, a survivor, is now "showing signs of progress."

**HALF NOTES:** After two years with the trio, Hamilton and Joe Frank apparently feel Alan Dennison's with them to stay. The group's changed its name from Hamilton, Joe Frank & Reynolds to Hamilton, Joe Frank & Dennison . . . Michael Brown, formerly with Left Banke and later, the Stories, plays keyboards in the Beckies, making their debut with an album on Sire label.

Sondra Simon & Simon Said, who have a single, "Mama, Can You Meet the 6:15," used to do backup vocals for Gloria Gaynor . . . Eleanor Rigby, backup vocalist for Ike & Tina Turner, Sly & the Family Stone and James Brown, bows with her own act this summer, Mixed Company.

Wayne Henderson, 20-year veteran of the Crusaders, is leaving to start his own jazz label. He'll be replaced on trombone by Barnett Brown.

Z Z Top, on a concert tour with their own Texas circus, quietly retired the timberwolf from the rock pack, but nobody'll say why. There's a rumor, however, that the wolf reverted to human form during the last full moon and wrecked the act.

The Elton John-Kiki Dee duet, "Don't Go Breakin' My Heart," comes out at month's end on Elton's Rocket label. Those who've heard it call the collaboration a "Peaches & Herb sound. . ." Insiders say following his East Coast concert tour this summer, Elton will retire from the road. He's "just plain exhausted."

Contrary to published reports, the Rolling Stones haven't cancelled their '76 U.S. tour but have merely postponed it for the fall. At that time, they'll combine their U.S. performance series with a go-round of South America. . . If the British band Thin Lizzy can maintain present momentum, look for them to become the next band in demand . . . Ringo Starr, cutting his first LP for Atlantic label, reportedly got a little help from his friend, John Lennon.

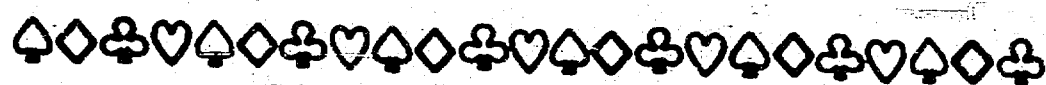
**LOVE THAT TITLE:** Ex-Jo Jo Gunne lead vocalist Jay Ferguson's album, "All Alone in the End Zone. . ." "Who'd She Coo" by the Ohio Players . . . "Kill That Roach," an appropriate cut from Miami rockers debut LP, "Notorious Miami . . ." New soul combo from Evanston, Ill., Urban Crisis . . . Alen Robin's new album on Carrot label, which sounds like an ad for unfinished furniture, "Naked, Really Naked . . ." New British satirical rocker, Alberto y Lost Trios Paranoias, with a single, "Dread Jaws," which members describe as "dreadful."

**STRANGER THAN FICTION:** It's hard to believe when the Beatles originally released "Got To Get You Into My Life" (a cut from their "Revolver" LP issued in summer of '66), soft music stations — middle-of-the-roads — wouldn't have touched the tune with a fork. It was (ugh) rock 'n roll.

Hard to believe because the song, just re-released, has swiftly slipped onto the playlist of some of those same softie stations, and a national magazine recently dubbed Paul McCartney & Wings a "middle-of-the-road" act.

There was a rumor circulating that Capitol label's Los Angeles headquarters was overrun with rats. According to one gossip writer, a disgruntled rocker, turned down by Capitol on a contract deal, had gifted executives with a box of rodents which promptly escaped and wreaked havoc on the premises.

Not so, said Capitol spokesmen. Actually, they claim, three professional models decided to "take five" during the photo session for an upcoming "Triumvirat" album cover — you know how hot those lights are. According to all those people standing on the desk, however, the models are listed at their agency under the category, "Rodent, White Male."



## Bridge Talk

BY CHARLES H. GOREN AND OMAR SHARIF

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North-South vulnerable.  
East deals.

**NORTH**

♠ K 10

♥ 4 2

♦ K Q 10 8 5

♣ A 7 5 2

**WEST EAST**

♠ 9 4

♠ A 8 7 6 5 2

♥ A Q 10 8

♥ J 7 6 3

♦ 7 3 2

♦ J 4

♣ K 10 9 6

♣ 8

**SOUTH**

♠ Q J 3

♥ K 9 5

♦ A 9 6

♣ Q J 4 3

The bidding:

East South West North

2♣ Pass Pass 3♦

Pass 3NT Pass Pass

Pass

Opening lead: Nine of ♣.

There are a lot of rules to remember during the play of the cards, such as "eight-ever, nine-never," "third hand high," etc. However, these rules are meant to be guidelines, not commandments. Special situations call for special solutions. Let your bridge intelligence be your guide, not rote.

East's weak two spade opening bid would be considered eccentric even by the most ardent users of that weapon. Although vulnerability was in his favor, our distaste for his action on such a bad suit with a side four-card major cannot be expressed too strongly. South and East had nothing to contribute, but North correctly elected to balance with three diamonds. South was delighted at this turn of events and converted to three no trump.

East's bid did have one practical advantage in the

play—it steered West to a spade lead, which did not help declarer's cause. Dummy's king was won by East's ace, and the crux of the hand was reached early.

It was obvious from looking at dummy that if declarer's side had a weakness, it was likely to be in hearts. In fact, any return other than a heart would have allowed declarer to coast home easily. East did find the heart shift. Unfortunately, though, he remembered that you should lead fourth-best of a suit and shifted to the three of hearts. Declarer covered with the nine, and now there was no way he could be stopped from making his contract.

It was apparent to East, when he won the ace of spades, that he was in for the first and last time. Once he decided to shift to hearts, he should have returned the jack to cater for the actual lie of the cards. This would have allowed the defenders to score four heart tricks in addition to the ace of spades. It's true that by leading an unsupported honor, East might have caused his partner to go wrong if the cards were distributed differently. However, it was his best chance to beat the contract and he should have seized the opportunity to violate a bridge "rule."

