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Last Updated: May 31, 2010 1:00AM

**Irvin Romig, Sterling Heights**

**Performer loved life as Ricky the Clown**

Mark Hicks / The Detroit News

**Irvin Romig** loved clowning around to brighten a kid's day.

For decades the longtime circus performer known as **Ricky the Clown** regaled young viewers throughout Metro Detroit on his own local TV show. And even through his 80s, he continued donning a wig, bright makeup, rubbery nose and colorful outfits for personal appearances.

"He had an amazing transformation. Truly he became a different person," said **Ed Golick**, master of detroitkidshow.com, which profiles area children's programming from the 1950s and 1960s.

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"He put his heart and soul into his clowning. He lived and breathed being a clown."

Mr. Romig died **Sunday, May 23, 2010** after an illness. He was 90.

Born Feb. 1, 1920, in Detroit, he grew up with parents who both performed in the circus.

Performing through his teens, Mr. Romig later served in the Army as an infantryman and K-9 Corps dog trainer, according to **Detroit News** archives.

Returning to the United States, he joined the Detroit Shrine and Ringling Brothers circuses as a rider and clown.

He later appeared in the 1952 film "The Greatest Show on Earth," relatives said, and wed **Rose Dobo**, who became part of his act.

In the early 1950s, he joined **WXYZ-TV** (Channel 7), eventually hosting a program as **Ricky the Clown**.

"He had a menagerie of animals," Golick said. "He kept a live llama, a miniature buffalo, all kinds of monkeys he'd bring. His gimmick was... a dead-on impression of (entertainer) Al Jolson."

Mr. Romig loved being "the happy tramp," said his son, Christopher. "He didn't want to be stagnant. He always thought of skits to do. He liked seeing the children happy."

After his show ended in the 1960s, Mr. Romig continued performing for various events.

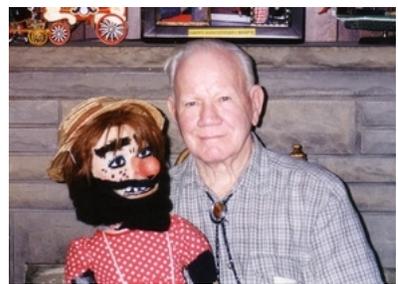
Describing his love of the gig to The Detroit News in

1971, he said: "...The only way I'm really rich is in the great memories I've got. I remember a lot of funny things and a lot of laughing kids."

Mr. Romig also joined an arts education program and was inducted into the International Clown Hall of Fame in 2001.

"He was upbeat," his son said. "He did exactly what he wanted his entire life."

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Mr. Romig (detroitkidshow.com)

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