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# Marv Welch: Nightclub performer best known as the 'Wixie's Wonderland' elf

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If laughter is regarded as good medicine, then Marv Welch had a proven remedy with his zany brand of humor that entertained Detroit audiences young and old for decades.

A local nightclub performer for much of his career, Mr. Welch is probably best remembered for his TV role as Wixie, a lovable, elf-like creature on "Wixie's Wonderland," an hour-long children's show that aired during the 1950s on WXYZ-TV.

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Mr. Welch died of congestive heart failure Thursday at Autumn Woods Nursing Home in Warren. He was 81 and a former resident of St. Clair Shores.

"He was a unique talent and a versatile performer who mesmerized audiences with his comedy routines as well as his marvelous singing ability," said Johnny Ginger, a longtime friend and colleague. "Showbiz was his life."

With his extroverted personality and boyish looks, Mr. Welch appeared like the ideal candidate when WXYZ-TV officials approached him about hosting an early morning variety show for preschoolers.

Dressed in a blue tunic with a lightning bolt emblazoned on his chest and sporting a

beanie with an antenna on top, Welch's pixie character charmed kids with cheerful songs, jokes and lively banter.

The show debuted in the fall of 1953 and became an instant success. Recorded live in the WXYZ-TV studios in the Maccabees Building on Woodward Avenue in Detroit, it featured cartoons and appearances by a cast of regular guests on the show.

"Wixie was his claim to fame and had a huge following of fans," said Ginger, who also hosted a children's variety show at WXYZ-TV. "He had many fond memories of the show."

The show ran until 1957, when it was canceled, and Mr. Welch resumed his nightclub routine.

Born in Detroit to parents who were nightclub performers, Mr. Welch was introduced to singing at a young age. After graduating from Mackenzie High School in 1943, he served in the Army during World War II and drove a tank in Gen. George S. Patton Jr.'s Second Armored Division. Occasionally he emceed shows with the USO.

After the war, he attended what was then Wayne University and earned a degree in liberal arts. To help pay tuition, he sang nights in the lounge of a local bowling alley.

Survivors include his son, Bryan; daughter, Susan Gallagher; one brother; one sister, and four grandchildren.

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Marv Welch, 81, made people smile

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