After Oliver Hardy's death in 1957 at the age of sixty-five, his long-time partner Stan Laurel refused to perform publicly again. The British-born Laurel was far from reclusive. He lived in a small apartment in Santa Monica and was listed in the phonebook. Well-wishers would call up and ask to visit. Stan would welcome them with great stories and belly laughs that made him seem very different from the quiet, sad sack people saw onscreen. But why didn't he live in some big mansion in Bel Air? The comic explained that his divorces plus bad business investments had not left him well off. Ownership of the Laurel and Hardy screen characters belonged to producer Hal Roach who teamed the two of them together in the late 1920s. With a smile, Stan told the sad tale of the time he and his partner wanted to buy Laurel and Hardy dolls as gifts for their families; they received no royalties and had to pay full price.

Extra: In his later years, the very friendly Stan Laurel (1890-1965) was better off financially then he let on. After his comedy partner Oliver Hardy (1892-1957) died, Stan and his wife bought a large seven-room house in Santa Monica. It was too big for two retirees; they soon moved into a one-bedroom beach apartment. Stan was happy to welcome guests into his home whether they were famous or not. The smaller living space helped to discourage younger, lesser-known comics from hitting Laurel up for money.

Extra: Stan and Ollie were not always close off the screen. Laurel would spend his after-hours in the editing room where he had a reputation for drinking and carousing. The Harlem, Georgia-born Hardy, who was more actor than funny man, would usually leave to play golf as soon as the workday was done. Then in 1932, the two men hit on the idea of a joint vacation in England. Stan planned to see his family and Babe Hardy looked forward to checking out the British golf courses. The journey was meant to be private, but Hal Roach and some MGM Studios public relations men let the cat out of the bag. Both members of the comedy team, used to working in the relative isolation of the studio, were amazed at the crowds of people that greeted them abroad. Nine fans were injured in a mob scene when the two movie clowns disembarked at a train station. When Stan tried to return to his childhood home, the small market town of Ulverston, throngs of admirers prevented him from getting to the front door. The shocking realization of their worldwide stardom drew Laurel and Hardy much closer together as friends, especially after their bosses, who benefitted greatly from the international publicity of Stan and Ollie's trip, docked their salaries for the time they missed work.

Extra: In the early 1920s, Oliver Hardy's Italian barber patted his face with talcum

powder and said, “Nice a baby.”

Ollie’s friends heard about it and the actor became known as Babe.