

GILDERSLEEVE'S LADIES

Summerfield's most eligible bachelor was neither young nor handsome, but he had plenty of interest in love!

The women that Gildersleeve pursued added more than a little spice to his life, and Gildy was a prolific lover, by the standards of radio in the 1940's. The women passed through the series firing up the passion of Gildersleeve in their turn. He wrote poetry, plotted to steal kisses and hold their hands, schemed to sit next to them, and wooed them with his rich baritone voice.

SHIRLEY MITCHELL played Leila Ransom a Southern widow who moves into the house next to the Gildersleeves. She is a beauty and Gildy is smitten. The courtship lasts through the show's second season, leading up to the wedding day. Gildy suffers from cold feet as the happy day approaches, but it is Leila who leaves him at the altar.

Shirley Mitchell born, November 4, 1919 in Toledo, Ohio died November 11, 2013. Following a move to Chicago, Mitchell appeared in *The First Nighter* and played small parts in various soap operas including *The Story of Mary Marlin* and *The Road of Life*. After she relocated to Los Angeles, she played opposite Joan Davis and Jack Haley in *The Sealtest Village Store*. She also starred as Louella in *The Life of Riley* and joined the cast of *Fibber McGee and Molly* as Alice Darling in 1943. However her most prominent radio role was that of the charismatic Southern belle Leila Ransom on *The Great Gildersleeve* radio show beginning in September 1942. She appeared in *I love Lucy* as Marion Strong, Lucy's friend with the funny laugh. In 1962; in *Pete and Gladys* and between 1963-65 she made five appearances on *Perry Mason*. From 1965-67, she appeared as neighbour Marge Thornton on NBC's series *Please Don't Eat the Daisies*. She went on to appear in several TV shows of the 1960s and did voice-over work in subsequent decades. She appeared in an episode of the ABC crime drama *The Feather and Father Gang* in 1977.

BEA BENADERET played Leila Goodwin, Leroy's school principal. Bea Benaderet played many roles on the *Jack Benny Program* as well as "Millicent Carstairs" on *Fibber McGee and Molly*. Gildersleeve again finds himself happily engaged, with Leila's 'help' and then even more happily manages to remain a bachelor..

Beatrice "Bea" Benaderet born April 4, 1906 in New York City and reared in San Francisco, California died October 13, 1968. Her first job in radio was at KFRC in San Francisco, California. Her responsibilities there included acting, singing, writing, and producing. Her radio work in the 1940s included *Fibber McGee & Molly*, *The Jack Benny Program*, *My Favorite Husband*, *The Mel Blanc Show*, *The Great Gildersleeve*, and *Amos 'n Andy*. She played Blanche Morton, the next-door neighbor to George Burns and Gracie Allen, on both the radio and television incarnations of *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*. Bea was also a member of Orson Welles's *Mercury Theatre* repertory company. She also appeared in a wide variety of television work, which included a starring role in the 1960s television series *Petticoat Junction* and *Green Acres* as Shady Rest Hotel owner Kate Bradley. She was the original voice of Betty Rubble during the first four seasons of *The Flintstones*, and in *The Beverly Hillbillies* as Pearl Bodine. She did a great deal of voice work in Warner Bros. animated cartoons of the 1940s and 1950s, most famously as Granny.

UNA MERKEL played Leila's Cousin Adeline Fairchildshe too comes to town, moving into Leila's house next door to Gildy. Merkel's showbiz start was as Lillian Gish's stand-in.

Una Merkel born December 10, 1903 in Covington, Kentucky, and grew up in Philadelphia and New York City, died January 2, 1986. Best known for her film work she began her career as a stand-in for Lillian Gish, most notably in the 1928 classic *The Wind*, a late silent film. She appeared in a few films during the silent era, including the two-reel *Love's Old Sweet Song* (1923) made by Lee DeForest. She spent most of her time however in New York City working on Broadway. She then returned to Hollywood in *Abraham Lincoln* (1930) and finishing with the Elvis Presley film *Spinout* in 1966.

On the radio as well as *The Great Gildersleeve*, she also appeared in *Show Off* 1935, *Swing High Swing Low* 1940, *Stirring Blood* 1947, *The Gramps* 1948, *The Daughter In Law* 1953.