

The Time God Appeared on "You Bet Your Life"

(The following is a transcript of "You Bet Your Life" as it was originally telecast on May 6, 1954 at 8PM, by the National Broadcasting Company.)

GEORGE FENNEMAN: Here he is, the one, the only...

AUDIENCE: Groucho!

(Theme music.)

GROUCHO MARX: Thank you, thank you, and welcome to "You Bet Your Life." Say the secret word and a duck will come down and give you fifty dollars.

(The duck appears.)

FENNEMAN: And the secret word tonight is: clock.

GROUCHO: Okay, duck, scram. Fenneman, earn your salary and bring out the first contestants.

FENNEMAN: Groucho, please greet a Sioux City housewife, Mary McCracken, and her partner, God.

GROUCHO: Welcome to "You Bet Your Life," say the secret word and the duck will come down and give you each fifty dollars. It's something you see every day... Now, you are... Mary McCracken... any relation to Jimmy Crack Corn?

MARY: No, Groucho.

GROUCHO: Have you ever heard of "Jimmy Crack Corn and I Don't Care?"

MARY: Yes.

GROUCHO: Well, I don't care either... It says here you're from Detroit, Iowa. I always thought Detroit was in Michigan.

MARY: I was born in Detroit, Groucho, and I live in Iowa.

GROUCHO: I owe a few bucks to my brother Chico. So, what do you do in Iowa, Mary, besides shuck corn?

MARY: I'm a housewife.

GROUCHO: A housewife. So you're home a lot?

MARY: I have to be.

GROUCHO: Why? Are you under house arrest?

MARY: I have thirteen children.

GROUCHO: Oh, well...

(Extended applause.)

GROUCHO: Thirteen, eh? So it really is unlucky. And where's your husband now? Hiding, I presume.

MARY: He's in the audience -- with the kids.

GROUCHO: Stand up, kids. And you too, Dad, if you can. Do you know all their names, Mary? I'll understand if you don't. I have trouble remembering Gummo.

MARY: John, Joseph, James, Jerome, Jack, Jared, Marie, Melissa...

GROUCHO: Stop -- that's my daughter.

MARY: Myrna, Marjorie, Minnie...

GROUCHO: Wait -- that's my mother.

MARY: Myra, and Monica.

GROUCHO: What's your husband's name, Mary? It doesn't start with a J does it?

MARY: It's Joe.

GROUCHO: Well, Joe, you've certainly dug a nice hole for yourself... What kind of food do you serve this horde, Mary? It looks like a meat and potatoes crowd.

MARY: We eat a lot of hamburgers.

GROUCHO: Hamburgers? Are there any cows left in Iowa? What about hot dogs?

MARY: Oh, those too. And chicken.

GROUCHO: You eat a lot of chicken?

MARY: About fifty pounds a week.

GROUCHO: That's a lot of chicken. What about eggs?

MARY: Oh, I'd say about ten dozen eggs a week.

GROUCHO: So, Mary, tell me, which came first -- the chicken or the egg?

MARY: If I knew that, I'd be rich.

GROUCHO: That's correct. Fenneman, tell her how much she's won.

FENNEMAN: Uh, Groucho, we haven't started the game yet.

GROUCHO: Oh, my mistake. Well, Mary, with all these kids you must have quite a time getting them off to school every morning.

MARY: Actually, Groucho, we're educating our children ourselves, at home.

GROUCHO: Really? And what does that mean? You teach them how to do the dishes and wash the floors and cook dinner?

MARY: Well, that too, but all the regular subjects, like the three R's.

GROUCHO: The three R's? I remember them from vaudeville. They were awful.

MARY: No, I meant reading and writing and arithmetic -- math.

GROUCHO: Well, now, only one of those begins with the letter R, Mary. Do you have an explanation for that? Otherwise I don't think we can give you a passing grade in spelling.

FENNEMAN: Groucho, besides being the proud mother of thirteen, Mary has something else that distinguishes her.

GROUCHO: Is that so?

MARY: Well, Groucho, I met you many years ago on the set of one of your movies -- "A Day at the Circus."

GROUCHO: Uh-oh. Of course, now I remember you -- you were the lion tamer.

MARY: I was just three years old.

GROUCHO: You were? You have a good memory. I can't even remember what I had for lunch -- or who paid. Or what her name was. Well, why were you there, Mary? Were you under contract to MGM?

MARY: No. My dad was on the crew.

GROUCHO: He wasn't related to me, was he?

MARY: No, he was one of the people who built the sets.

GROUCHO: Really? Well, what do you know? You don't happen to remember what we talked about, do you?

MARY: Gee, I don't remember much of anything.

GROUCHO: Not a very memorable experience, was it? Anyway, you're a delightful young lady, Mary, and I'll get back to you in a moment, but first, let's meet your partner here... is it... God? God what?

GOD: It's just God.

GROUCHO: What kind of a name is that?

GOD: It is a man-made name.

GROUCHO: Because my name is really Julius, but no one calls me that. I don't want to tell you what they do call me, but they certainly don't call me Julius.

GOD: I go by many names.

GROUCHO: Is that so? Well, when you get your water bill, whose name is on it?

GOD: Some call me Jehovah, some call me Jesus, some call me Mohammed, some call me Krishna, some call me Vishnu, some call me-

GROUCHO: And I wish you'd stop. Now, tell me God, what do you do for a living? Do you have an occupation -- besides having enough names to start your own law firm?

GOD: I am the supreme being, the lord of the universe, the creator of everything that exists -- life, the earth -- everything.

GROUCHO: That's very interesting -- do you have any hobbies? Like playing polo, or beating rugs?

GOD: I am everything and I am everywhere. I know everything, and I see everything.

GROUCHO: Really? Have you seen the latest Lana Turner picture?

GOD: I see everything. I hear everything.

GROUCHO: Did you hear the one about the magician?

GOD: With his other suit still at the tailor?

GROUCHO: I guess you've heard that one.

GOD: I've heard everything. I know everything. I am the source of everything.

GROUCHO: Well, I'm very impressed, God, you've obviously done quite well for yourself, but tell me -- since you're so smart -- which came first, the bacon or the egg?

GOD: I --

GROUCHO: Or did you order the soup?

GOD: I don't know what you mean.

GROUCHO: Anyway, God, have you met George Fenneman?

GOD: Yes.

GROUCHO: Don't bother, Fenneman. He can't help you. Tell me, God, since you created everything, why couldn't you make women better drivers?

GOD: Obviously you're kidding.

GROUCHO: Obvious to you, maybe, but not to this audience. Mary, you've got thirteen kids, what advice can you give God here about running the universe?

MARY: Well, gee, he seems to be doing a pretty good job of it.

GROUCHO: Except for the women drivers. You know, you look a lot like my brother Harpo. I bet you get that all the time.

GOD: Yes, I do.

GROUCHO: You don't have to answer this, God, but about how old would you say you are?

GOD: I'm seventeen billion years old, Groucho.

(There is extended applause.)

GROUCHO: Well, you certainly don't look it. Anyway, you're a delightful couple and I'd love to go on talking to both of you, but it's time to play the game. Fenneman? Explain the rules.

FENNEMAN: The object is to answer four questions in a row correctly. Two incorrect answers in a row and you're out. Answer four in a row correctly and you get to come back and try for five or ten thousand dollars. The categories are "Geography," "Art and Artists," "Movies and Movie Stars," "War and Warriors," and "General Information."

GROUCHO: Pick a category and select an envelope from that category. Go ahead, Mary.

FENNEMAN: She picks "Geography."

GROUCHO: Okay, now I just want one answer between the two of you, talk it over if necessary, and here's the question: "It was once known as Constantinople, but today it goes by a different-"

GOD: Istanbul.

GROUCHO: Istanbul is correct.

FENNEMAN: That's one right, three more in a row and you get a shot at the big prize.

GROUCHO: That's very good, God, but you might want to talk it over with your partner next time. All right, Mary, pick another one.

MARY: I'll go with "Geography" again.

FENNEMAN: She picks "Geography."

GROUCHO: All right, here it is: "Pike's Peak is a mountain located near what major Rocky Mountain metro-"

GOD: Denver, Colorado.

GROUCHO: Denver, Colorado is correct.

FENNEMAN: That's two in a row. Two more and you'll be eligible to spin for five or ten thousand dollars.

GROUCHO: This God's a smart cookie, isn't he, Mary?

MARY: Yes he is.

GROUCHO: Well, pick another one.

MARY: Let's try... "General Information."

GROUCHO: Okay. "The word 'conductor' has several meanings, one of which is the conductor on a train. Can you give me two other meanings for the word 'conductor.'"

GOD: Conductor of an orchestra...

GROUCHO: Correct.

GOD: ... and a substance or medium that conducts heat, light, sound, or electric charge.

GROUCHO: That's absolutely correct.

FENNEMAN: That's three in a row, one more correct answer and you'll get the chance to go for the ten thousand dollars.

GROUCHO: That would buy a lot of eggs, wouldn't it, Mary?

MARY: It sure would.

GROUCHO: Okay, kids, pick another one.

MARY: I'll stick with "General Information."

GROUCHO: Stick with a winner. And don't forget, God, you can talk it over with your partner before you answer. Here's the question: "Is it possible to be in two places at once?"

GOD: No.

GROUCHO: I'm sorry, that's incorrect. "You can be in two places at once, if you straddle the border of two states, for example." You should have talked it over.

FENNEMAN: That's one wrong, another incorrect answer and you'll be eliminated.

GROUCHO: Pick another category.

MARY: Okay, let's try... "Art and Artists."

GROUCHO: "He liked to paint ceilings, particularly a very famous one in--"

GOD: Michelangelo.

GROUCHO: Michelangelo is correct.

FENNEMAN: That's one right -- three more and you'll get to come back.

GROUCHO: What'll it be?

MARY: "Art and Artists."

GROUCHO: "Art and Artists" again. "You often see his work on a well-known cigar box. What is this Dutch master's name?" This one's easy for me.

GOD: Rembrandt.

GROUCHO: Correct.

FENNEMAN: You now have two in a row. Two more and you go to the jackpot round.

GROUCHO: How about it, Mary? "Art and Artists" again?

MARY: Let's try "War and Warriors."

GROUCHO: "War and Warriors" it is. Listen carefully, kids. "He said, 'I shall return,' and he did. What famous General am I referring to?"

GOD: MacArthur.

GROUCHO: Charles -- I mean Douglas -- MacArthur is correct. You know, there was a brilliant writer by the name of Charles MacArthur.

GOD: Of course.

GROUCHO: He wrote "The Front Page" with another great writer, Ben Hecht. Bet you knew that too, right?

GOD: Yes, of course.

FENNEMAN: Groucho, Mary and God now have three correct answers in a row. One more and they qualify to spin the big prize wheel.

GROUCHO: Okay, kids, you heard the man. Pick a category.

MARY: Let's try... "Movies and Movie Stars."

GROUCHO: "Movies and Movie Stars." Remember, get this right and you'll come back and have a chance at the big money. Here it is: "In the 1947 fantasy 'Miracle on 34th Street,' Edmund Gwenn plays a character-"

GOD: Santa Claus.

GROUCHO: Well, it was another name...

GOD: Kris Kringle.

GROUCHO: That's the answer I was looking for.

FENNEMAN: That's four in a row. You've now earned the right to come back and win up to ten thousand dollars.

GROUCHO: Congratulations, kids, and I'll see you both later.

(Commercial for DeSoto-Plymouth dealers.)

FENNEMAN: Groucho, because of the length of the first segment, our only contestants eligible for the final round are Mary McCracken, and her partner, God. Folks, why don't you come back out here.

GROUCHO: Welcome back, welcome back... you both know the rules. Spin the wheel, and play for either five or ten thousand dollars. Who's gonna spin? Mary? God?

GOD: Okay.

GROUCHO: Give it a whirl, God... say, you don't know your own strength, do you? When the wheel stops spinning, and it may never stop... ah, there it goes.

FENNEMAN: And they'll be playing for the big prize, ten thousand dollars.

GROUCHO: Okay, now listen carefully and just one answer between you. For ten thousand dollars, here's the question: "What is time?" You've got thirty seconds to think it over...

(Theme music.)

GROUCHO: Okay, what's your answer?

MARY: You go ahead.

GOD: Time is that which is measured by a clock.

(The duck appears.)

GROUCHO: Clock is the secret word -- here's fifty dollars for each of you. Congratulations. All right, duck, beat it. Unfortunately, your answer to the question was incorrect. I'll read it to you: "Like space, time is infinite, and therefore cannot be measured, or defined." Well, you didn't win the big money -- what did they wind up with, Fenneman?

FENNEMAN: They won two hundred dollars in the quiz, and another fifty each for saying the secret word, so they wound up with, let's see, that's one hundred and fifty dollars each.

GROUCHO: Not bad for a night's work, kids. Thanks for being on You Bet Your Life, and remember: Tell 'em Groucho sent you.

(Theme music.)