

Spanky and Our Gang



This is one of the framed pictures hanging behind my desk in our studio. I've actually lost count as to how many clients have pointed to it and said, "Is that you?"

I'm not sure if I should be offended. I would like to think that, at that age, I was certainly cuter than the guys in this picture but my clients wouldn't necessarily know that. Neither would they know that the kids in that particular photo were born a lot earlier than I was. What you are looking at are two members of The Little Rascals, aka Our Gang.

On the right is Spanky, played by George "Spanky" McFarland. On the left is Mickey, played by child actor Robert Blake. I still remember watching the Our Gang comedy shorts as a child... even though they predated me by decades. Here are some random facts about this beloved piece of entertainment:

- All told, 41 child actors appeared in over 220 short films... starting in the 1920s. Spanky and his gang didn't come along until the second decade of this franchise's existence. Over time, as children became too old for the franchise, they were simply replaced with younger

actors.

- Two unknown child actors both auditioned to become part of the Little Rascals cast back in the day. They were rejected. Their names were Mickey Rooney and Shirley Temple.
- Petey the dog was played by Pal the Wonder Dog who was also the model for the Buster Brown ads. When he was cast as Petey the director learned that the eye circle was made with permanent ink for the shoe advertisements. He decided to keep it on.
- When Petey died, one of his pups inherited the role. But they painted the ring around the other eye.
- The series was produced from 1922 to 1929 as silent short films. Afterwards, as sound was added, they entered into their most popular phase.
- The Little Rascals characters that I remember most include: Spanky, Alfalfa, Darla, Petey, Buckwheat, Mickey, Froggy, and some other kids whose character names I can't recall.
- The theme song, "[Good Old Days](#)," has become iconic in its own right. Written by Leroy Shield, it was inserted into the episodes in the 1930s.
- It is said that the concept for The Our Gang comedies came to Hal Roach after a series of bad auditions from over coached child actors. He then looked out his window and saw un-coached children on the schoolyard just being themselves. That became the impetus for The Little Rascals. Kids being kids was what they were after.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio of Mount Dora specialize in the preservation of family memories. For more information, call 352-735-0885 or visit www.homevideostudio.com/mtd.