



Flip Wilson, Irreverent Comedian

Clerow Wilson was born into an impoverished home in Jersey City, N.J., and quit school in 1950 at age 16 to join the Air Force. He served for four years and was discharged in 1954 but not before he had made a reputation as an entertainer and acquired the nickname "Flip" for his irreverent brand of humor. After his discharge, Wilson spent nearly a decade working at odd jobs and developing a comedy act at various night clubs. It wasn't until Hollywood began to actively seek out black entertainers in the 1960s that he got his first big break. He made his TV debut on "The Tonight Show" in 1965, and that led to many other appearances and, ultimately, his own popular variety series in 1968. He won one Emmy for performance and one for writing in 1971. Wilson died in 1998.