

Our Miss Brooks
Ryan Ellett

Our Miss Brooks took its first tentative step toward reality during the weekend of April 10-11, 1948, when an audition show featuring Shirley Booth was cut in New York City. CBS head William Paley was directly involved in the show's development and when he and Booth couldn't see eye to eye on the new program, Booth was dropped from the project. Joan Blondell was briefly considered for the part but Eve Arden eventually landed the lead role. A second audition starring Arden aired on June 23. Developed as part of a cohort of new shows by the network that included *Life With Luigi*, *The Adventures of Philip Marlowe*, and *My Favorite Husband*, *Our Miss Brooks* premiered July 19, 1948.

Our Miss Brooks followed the everyday exploits of Connie Brooks, an English teacher at Madison High School. She spent years pining after biology teacher Philip Boynton (played by Jeff Chandler) while teaching under the sometimes heavy-handed leadership of principal Osgood Conklin (played by blustery Gale Gordon). Jane Morgan, who played Miss Brooks' landlady Margaret Davis, and Richard Crenna, who played student Walter Denton were also regulars on the program.

A popular program almost since its debut, the Colgate-Palmolive-Peet company became its first sponsor early in the fall of 1948. Four years later in 1952 *Our Miss Brooks* was adapted for television with much of the cast playing their role on both radio and the small screen. 1956, which might be called peak *Our Miss Brooks*, also saw the release of a full length motion picture with most of the radio and television cast again resuming their roles. 1956 also proved to be the final year that original episodes of both the radio and television series were produced.

While *Our Miss Brooks* remained on the radio airwaves another two years, after 1956 all the episodes were reruns of earlier broadcasts. Television reruns can still be found occasionally on cable television.

Written by Al Lewis for most of its eight-year run, the humor of the series has held up very well in the decades since its original airing and is still regarded fondly by many old time radio fans today. *Our Miss Brooks* avoided most of the stereotype jokes and topical humor that have dimmed enthusiasm for others series since that time. Eve Arden, Gale Gordon, and Jeff Chandler played their roles to perfection and the storylines and jokes continue to be relevant and entertaining today.