



**John  
Carson**  
*Navy*

## **John Carson**

**Oct 23, 1925 - Jan 23, 2005**

**BIRTHPLACE: Corning, Iowa**

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### **SOLDIER DETAILS**

**HIGHEST RANK: ensign**

**DIVISION: Navy, USS Pennsylvania**

**THEATER OF OPERATION: American**

**HONORED BY: The Eisenhower Foundation**

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### **BIOGRAPHY**

By the time he turned 18 in 1943, World War II was raging and John Carson joined the Navy through a special program designed to churn out good officers for the war effort. He attended Columbia University and was commissioned an ensign before the war's end. Assigned to the battleship USS Pennsylvania, which survived Pearl Harbor, his duties were to decode encrypted enemy radio traffic. Ever the entertainer, Carson recalled that the high point of his military career was performing a magic trick for Navy Secretary James Forrestal. Carson left the service in 1946. In the 1950s and early 1960s, Carson did a string of shows on CBS, NBC and ABC, but he made his name in 1962 when he took over hosting "The Tonight Show," then known simply as "Tonight." The show started in 1954 with Army veteran Steve Allen as host. Fellow Army vet Jack Paar took over hosting duties in 1957, but when Carson came in, he made it his own. Over the course of the next 30 years, Carson not only achieved Benny's prediction of stardom, he became an entertainment business kingmaker, launching the careers of some of the biggest names in comedy, including David Letterman, Robin Williams, Jay Leno, Jerry Seinfeld, Arsenio Hall, Jeff Foxworthy, Ellen DeGeneres, Rodney Dangerfield, Joan Rivers, David Brenner, Tim Allen, Drew Carey, Howie Mandel and Roseanne Barr. Carson retired in 1992, handing the reins of the show to Jay Leno. Courtesy of Military.com