**History**

**Harry Skarbo**, of Norwegian and Swedish descent, was born on October 21, 1908, in Tacoma, Washington – being the son of Hans Hall Gustavson Skarbo and Elsie Gilbertson Skarbo of Fox Island. Elsie died before Harry’s third birthday, and Hans sent Harry to be raised by the Stewart family. He grew up in the Proctor district of Tacoma and graduated from Stadium High School. He got started in radio at what was then the brand new station, KVI, in 1927. Harry remained in Washington developing his talent as an announcer until 1930 – when he set out for California. Harry could also play the banjo, but neither announcers nor banjo players were in short supply in Los Angeles, so Harry developed some comedy routines.

He worked briefly for Al Pearce and his gang (in San Francisco?) in Fall, 1932, but Pearce’s program ended. Harry then set out to join a program with wider syndication, Merrymakers. When that show ended in November, 1933, Harry returned to Pearce’s gang – as Yogi Yorgesson the Hindu-Swedish mystic. Harry made Yogi into a mixture of various people with whom he was somewhat familiar. One was a folk singer, Ivar Haglund, whom he had encountered in Washington. [Haglund later became more famous after he opened, in 1938, Seattle’s first aquarium and an associated restaurant.] Mohandas Gandhi, the Indian religious leader, was in the news internationally in 1930 for his civil disobedience with respect to the British government. Harry Stewart was impressed by Gandhi’s spirituality and combined Haglund and Gandhi into the first incarnation of Yogi Yorgesson. As Harry told interviewer Will Jones in 1950, “The thing was ripe for a comedy mystic. I thought it would be funny to have a mystic with a Swedish accent. I remembered those accents, from up north, and I practiced.”

Harry appears to have used Yogi for the first time while he was on Merrymakers in 1933, but he became popular locally while he was with Al Pearce and his gang (1934-1937). In front of live audience, Harry would emerge wearing a lumberjack’s shirt, Swedish boots, and a Hindu loincloth and turban. His prediction routine may have been one of the inspirations for Johnny Carson’s similar character, Karnac. He would make fun of his own costume, saying about the crystal ball, ”I can see my face on da udder side.” His routine, like Karnac’s, consisted of questions called into him by listeners. Of course, he was actually just reading a script that he had written. His son, Steve Stewart, remembered while talking to Yorgesson researcher Steven Howard, “A lady called in and asked, "My baby just swallowed some bullets, what should I do?" Yogi answered, "Give him some castor oil, and don't point him at anybody!"“

By 1936, Pearce’s gang was being heard as far away as Canada, and Yogi was starting to see advertisements as his own character – distinct from Al and Cal Pearce. That same year, Harry married Gretchen Sissell, who had been one of the Earl Carroll Girls – a dancer. For a few years, Yogi recorded his own program for radio broadcast. In 1939, Harry and Gretchen moved to Chicago, where Harry began to write radio scripts. After the United States entered World War Two, Harry resurrected his Yogi Yorgesson character in support of the war effort. He appeared on Chicago’s station WBBM as part of the program, Victory Matinee and was soon (May, 1942) signed on to their staff – later becoming a producer. He remained a producer through 1943 (apparently going freelance work) and began perform in night clubs and to write songs, too. He wrote the words to “Humphrey, the Sweet Singing Pig” in 1943 – registering that song on March 19th; the music was supplied by Jimmy Hilliard.

Harry produced the Chicago-based program “The Sky’s the Limit.” That show starred actress Fran Allison – a few years before she worked with puppets Kukla and Ollie. Nineteen forty-five saw Harry do a screen test in Hollywood, but nothing came of it; he remained in radio working for NBC. In March, 1946,
Harry created a new (but familiar) character, Longfellow Larson the poetic janitor, for a radio program called “Phone Again, Finnegan.” The program gained in popularity, switching from NBC to CBS, but it lost its chief sponsor and was cancelled later that year. After that, Harry returned to California – apparently bringing along one of the Finnegan musicians, Johnny Duffy. By this time, he had succeeded in getting the King’s Jesters to release “Humphrey the Sweet Singing Pig” (see below).

That was when Harry wound up at S&G Records on Mateo Street in Los Angeles. In 1947, the S&G label was most famous for giving the world the song “Cocaine Blues.” The first hit version of the song was released during the second week in July, 1947, but some time before that S&G pressed the original version of the recording, by W.A. Nichols’ Western Aces (S&G 011). That original featured vocals by Red Arnall, the song’s writer. By July 26th, S&G had sold well enough to help get the label started. S&G initiated their 3000 series, on which Yogi’s first singles would be pressed. [“Cocaine Blues” was later made more famous by Johnny Cash.] Nichols’ version was picked up in 1948 by Imperial Records.

In character as Yogi, Harry once described his voice as being like “a bullfrog with laryngitis.”

**Singles**

“Humphrey, the Sweet Singing Pig”/“Mean to Me”
Shown as the King’s Jesters
Vogue Picture Record R-751

![Picture Disc](image)

August, 1946
Harry is co-credited as the author for the A-side – listed as Yogi Yorgesson.

“My Clam-Digger Sweetheart”/“I Don’t Give a Hoot”
S&G 3009

![Label](image)

Ref. SG 319/320  S & G 3009
Blue label with SG-319 and SG-320 but no number 3009 1948
Blue label with script logo and number 3009 1949

“Square Dance Hulda”/“All Pooped Out”
S&G 3010

White label promo
Blue label 1949

“Root’a Toot Toot”/“You Fooled Me Once, You Fooled Me Twice”
S&G 3011

Blue label November, 1949
The A-side is an early version of “Real Gone Galoot,” which Yogi re-recorded for Capitol. This single is rare.

Yogi attracted the attention of Capitol records, who signed him to a contract on October 1st. Rather than simply reissuing his S&G material, they brought him into the studio to record two new songs. Meanwhile, S&G pressed 60,000 additional copies of Yogi’s first single and 40,000 of his second. Harry pulled out “I Yust Go Nuts at Christmas” and “Yingle Bells,” which could do well in the upcoming Christmas season. Through most of the 1950’s it remained one of Capitol’s best-selling singles of all time.

Scranton Promo (unknown date)
“I Yust Go Nuts at Christmas”/“Yingle Bells”
Capitol 57-781 (and later F-781)

Promo Los Angeles 78 Scranton 78 (1) Scranton 78 (2)

Reissue 78 Scranton 45 (1) Scranton 45 (2) Scranton 45 (3)

White or yellow label promotional 78
Purple label commercial 78
Purple label commercial 45

November, 1949 November, 1949 December, 1949

The second label of the first pressing of the Scranton 78 has more space above “Yogi Yorgesson” on both sides.

The labels of the 45s differ slightly in the placement of the information. On one, the F of F781 is under the “ee” of “Beechwood”; on the other it is under the “ch” of “Beechwood.”

The “OC” pressing is from 1951-2.

The second pressing of the 78 came out between 1950 and 1957.

“The Bees and the Birds”/“Real Gone Galoot”
Shown as the Golliwogs
Capitol 816 (and F-816)

Los Angeles Scranton

YOGESSON’S HIT DISK
HOLLYWOOD, Nov. 26. — Yogi Yorgesson’s initial Capitol disking appears as a hit, according to Cap’s initial orders. Item, “I Yust Go Nuts at Christmas” may become another Two Front Teeth, with Scandinavian dialect comic singing in style from Thrust, R.I., and not only the Wisconsin-Minnesota market as originally anticipated.

Cap booked Yogi after the comical eulogy on an a cappella recording of Clara Dipper’s Sunflower. Initial disking for Cap is slated to feature the Yule mart and is backed by Yingle Bells.

Another Capitol Smash by

“Real Gone Galoot”
In which Yogi gets mixed up with something very peculiar in Italy.
Purple label commercial 78  
Purple label commercial 45  
The second pressing (later in 1950) lacks the ring around the label.  
The third pressing (probably 1950) adds the publishing credits that had been missing up to that point.

“Nincompoops Have All the Fun”/“Mrs. Yohnson, Turn Me Loose!”  
Capitol 1013 (and F-1013)

White label promotional 78  
Purple label commercial 78  
Purple label commercial 45  
April, 1950
“My Little Old Shack in Minneapolis, Minnesota”/“Someone Spiked the Punch at Lena’s Wedding”
Capitol 1216 (and F-1216)

Promo  Los Angeles 78  Scranton 78

Promo  Los Angeles 78  Scranton 78

Scranton 45

White label promotional 78  October, 1950
Purple label commercial 78  October, 1950
Purple label commercial 45  October, 1950

“Cookies, Pie, and Cake”/“Vot Skall We Do”
Capitol 1410 (and F-1410)

Promo  Los Angeles 78  Scranton 78

Scranton 45

Promo  Los Angeles 78  Scranton 78

Promo  Los Angeles 78  Scranton 78
White label promotional 78  March, 1951
Purple label commercial 78  March, 1951
Purple label commercial 45  March, 1951

“A Letter from Harry”/“All Pooped Out”
Capitol 1531 (and F-1531)

Promo  Los Angeles 78  Scranton 78

Scranton 45 (1)  Scranton 45 (2)  Singing “All Pooped Out”

White label promotional 78  March, 1951
Purple label commercial 78  March, 1951
Purple label commercial 45  March, 1951
Copies of the 45 with the “optional center” were made after capitol introduced the OC45 on May 7, 1951.

“The Picnic Song”/“That’s How Your Mom Became Mine”
Capitol 1734 (and F-1734)

Promo  Los Angeles 78  Scranton 78

Scranton 45
White label promotional 78
Purple label commercial 78
Purple label commercial 45
August, 1951
August, 1951
August, 1951

“The Christmas Party”/“I Was Santa Claus at the Schoolhouse (for the PTA)”
Capitol 1831 (and F-1831)

LA Promo
Scranton Promo (1)
Scranton Promo (2)
LA 78

Scranton 78
Scranton 45 (1)
Scranton 45 (2)

White or yellow label promotional 78
Purple label commercial 78
Purple label commercial 45
October, 1951
October, 1951
October, 1951

“Ya, Sure, Please Excuse Me”/“Don’t Put Off Chasing Women”
Capitol 1972 (and F-1972)

Promo
LA 78
Scranton 78

Scranton 45 (1)
Scranton 45 (2)
White label promotional 78               February, 1952
Purple label commercial 78              February, 1952
Purple label commercial 45              February, 1952

“I’m Gonna Vote Republican”/“I’m Going to Vote for a Democrat”
Capitol 2135  (and F-2135)

Scranton 45
White label promotional 78               June, 1952
Purple label commercial 78               June, 1952 (?)
Purple label commercial 45               June, 1952

“The Object of My Affection”/“Who Hid the Halibut on the Poop Deck”
Capitol 2335  (and F-2335)
Yellow label promotional 78 January, 1953
Purple label commercial 78 January, 1953
Purple label commercial 45 January, 1953

“Yes, Sir, That’s My Baby”/“Yokohama Mama”
Shown as Harry Kari
Capitol 2392 (and F-2392)

Promo (LA) Promo (S) Scranton 78

Scranton 45

Yellow label promotional 78 March, 1953
Purple label commercial 78 March, 1953
Purple label commercial 45 March, 1953

“Nishimoto at the Bat”/“The Love Bug Will Bite You”
Shown as Harry Kari
Capitol 2516 (and F-2516)

Scranton 78 Scranton 45

Purple label commercial 78 July, 1953
Purple label commercial 45 July, 1953
“Interested in Love” (with GeGe Pearson)/“Come Straight Home Tonight” (with GeGe Pearson)
Capitol 2552 (and F-2552)

Promo (LA)

Scranton 45

White label promotional 78 August, 1953
Purple label commercial 78 August, 1953 ?
Purple label commercial 45 August, 1953

“The Night Before Christmas”/“Oh! Oh! Don’t Ever Go”
Shown as Harry Kari
Capitol 2618 (and F-2618)

Promo (S) Scranton 78 Scranton 45

White label promotional 78 October, 1953
Purple label commercial 78 October, 1953
Purple label commercial 45 October, 1953
“Ya Ya Ya”/“Mother-in-Law”
Capitol 2643 (and F-2643)

Promo (LA)  Promo (S)  Scranton 45

White label promotional 78  November, 1953
Yellow label promotional 78  November, 1953
Purple label commercial 45  November, 1953

“The Specialist”/“The Goose-Plucker’s Picnic”
Shown as Claude Hopper
Capitol F-2724

Scranton 45

Purple label commercial 45  February, 1954

“The Egg-Laying Contest”/“The Snoring Song”
Capitol 2805 (and F-2805)

Promo (LA)  Promo (S)  Scranton 45

White label promotional 78  May, 1954
Purple label commercial 45  May, 1954
“I Give Up! – What is It?/“Be Kind to the Street Corner Santa Claus”
Capitol 2978 (and F-2978)
Scranton 78  Promo 45 (S)  Scranton 45
Purple label commercial 78
White label promotional 45
Purple label commercial 45
September, 1954  September, 1954  September, 1954

“Ballad of Ole Svenson”/“Lonesome Loverboy”
Capitol 3089 (and F-3089)
Promo 45 (S)  Scranton 45  Los Angeles 45
Purple label commercial 78
White label promotional 45
Purple label commercial 45
April, 1955  April, 1955  April, 1955

“Yellow Rose of Osaka”/“Ragtime Cowboy Joe”
Shown as Harry Kari
Capitol F-3257
Promo 45 (S)  Scranton 45
White label promotional 45
October, 1955
Purple label commercial 45 October, 1955

“Yellow Rose of Osaka” / “Ragtime Cowboy Joe”
Shown as Harry Kari
Capitol F-3257

Promo 45 (S)  Scranton 45

White label promotional 45  October, 1955
Purple label commercial 45  October, 1955

“There’ll be Some Changes Made, Mine Hare” / “Rock Around the Danube”
Shown as Klaus Hammerschmidt
Capitol F-3406

Promo 45 (S)  Promo 45 (LA)  Scranton 45

White label promotional 45  April, 1956
Purple label commercial 45  April, 1956

“I Yust Go Nuts at Christmas” / “Yingle Bells”
Capitol F-3904

Purple label commercial 45  reissued November, 1957
Capitol reissued several of their Christmas singles for 1957, and “I Yust Go Nuts at Christmas” was among them. The single remained in print for the remainder of the vinyl period for Capitol Records. It is known to exist in the following pressings:
F3904 – purple label with small logo at top (1957)
3904 – purple label with small logo at top (1957-8)
3904 – purple label with logo at left (1959-62)
  Orange/yellow swirl label (1962-68)
  Target label with round logo and white dot (1971-2)
  Orange label (1972-75)
  Orange label with rights print (1975-78)
  Purple label with “Mfd. by Capitol” (1978-83)
  Rainbow label with print in color band (1983-88)
  Purple label with “Manufactured by Capitol” and small logo (1988-89)
The A-side was also issued together with Stan Freberg’s “Nuttin for Christmas” as Capitol S7-57891.

45 RPM Boxed Sets

Yogi Yorgesson’s Family Album
Capitol CCF-336
Contains three purple-label 45 RPM discs.
These may be found with optional center discs.
Extended Play Releases

The Trials and Tribulations of Yogi Yorgesson
Capitol EAP-1-411

The first pressings feature a back cover that has a black Capitol logo at the bottom against a white background and concludes with the slogan “longer in music...lower in cost.” Later back covers are shown below the EP listings.

Dark Green Label
April, 1953

Yingle Bells
Capitol EAP-1-461

The first pressings feature a back cover that has a black Capitol logo at the bottom against a background containing sketches of entertainers and concludes with the slogan “longer in music...lower in cost.” Later back covers are shown below the EP listings.

Dark Green Label
November, 1953

“The Christmas Party” is shown on the cover as having the title of “The Christmas Story.”
## EP Back Covers

<table>
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<tr>
<th>First EP on List</th>
<th>Highest-Numbered EP</th>
<th>Probable Date</th>
<th>Corner Number</th>
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<td>446</td>
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The first Yogi EP (411) is known to exist with back covers up through P1017.
The second Yogi EP (461) is known to exist with most of the back covers listed here, including the 1959 one.
**Albums**

**Yogi Yorgesson’s Family Album**  
*Capitol H-336*  
Purple label with “long playing microgroove” at the bottom.  
Issued c. September, 1952.

**The Great Comedy Hits of Yogi Yorgesson**  
*Capitol Star Line T-1620*  
Gold label  
Issued October, 1961.

First pressings have gold labels and full-color back covers. Later pressings (1962-1966) have all-black labels and black-and-white back covers.

Harry also appeared on the occasional “various artists” album from Capitol: