CARL REINER

The Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters did something unusual at their last awards luncheon. Gone was the big dais of VIPs to toast and gently roast the honoree. Instead there were just two chairs on stage at the Sportsmen’s Lodge for the legendary CARL REINER and his buddy TOM BERGERON. Both would capture the PPB members with their wit and stories before Reiner was presented the coveted ART GILMORE Career Achievement Award from PPB president CHUCK STREET.

The affable Dancing With the Stars host Bergeron “interviewed” his longtime friend using Reiner’s book I Just Remembered (a great follow-up to his I Remember Me memoir) as a template for the funny and fascinating conversation. Bergeron quipped that when he visits the home of “the man of so many amazing accomplishments, I have to move around all his awards so we have a place to sit and talk.”

Before talking about his life, Reiner mentioned his great admiration for Bergeron, “who I like as much as a hot dog and sauerkraut—and I really love hot dogs with sauerkraut. In fact when I was a kid, and I loved going to school, when I was sick I had to ask myself ‘Am I too sick to eat a hot dog with sauerkraut?’” And if the answer was ‘Yes,’ I knew I was too sick to go to school. So that’s how much I love Tom Bergeron.”

Tom kept Reiner on course, navigating all the anecdotes that kept flowing from the man who has done it all—writer, director, producer, actor, and crazy-legs dancer. There were clips shown reflecting Reiner’s variety as a performer, and the wild dance routines were unbelievable, showing off the flexibility of an acrobat with rubber-band legs. Reiner noted he’s still very nimble, and Bergeron confirmed it, saying, “We both can sit in the yoga lotus position.” Tom, 59, demonstrated it for the crowd. Carl at 92 did not, but we’ll take his word for it. Carl said that he remembers getting his first laugh as a limber kid “by putting one leg behind my head and hopping around on one foot.”

Carl gave credit to his father “for my work ethic. He also taught me how to solve problems by telling me, ‘If you have a problem, step back and take a good look at it, and the answer will come to you.’ I still do that to this day, and it works.”

Of course there were stories about SID CAESAR, who Carl called the “greatest comedy star who ever lived. Your Show of Shows was live television and he was brilliant.” Reiner dispelled the notion that Sid Caesar inspired the egomaniac Alan Brady character he played on The DICK VAN DYKE Show, which Carl created, produced and wrote. “Alan Brady was a creation of mine and sort of a composite of three guys I thought had some of the qualities—JACKIE GLEASON, MILTON BERLE and PHIL SILVERS.”

After talking about Carl’s TV shows, movies, Broadway, friends, social activities, and a little bit of politics, Bergeron regretfully had to wrap things up because Reiner was going off to a book signing. But before he left, Carl announced he had a unique gift for all the PPB members and their guests who packed the ballroom. “I couldn’t give each of you a copy of the book, but I have autographed each page of one book and I have 330 pages, which should be plenty,” Reiner said offering everyone a treasured keepsake.
TV Producer George Sunga Receives Diamond Circle Award

LARRY VANDERVEEN presented PPB’s Diamond Circle Award to long-time member GEORGE SUNGA at the September 12th luncheon. Below are Mr. Vanderveen’s remarks introducing Mr. Sunga:

Today’s Diamond Circle inductee is one of television’s most talented and most respected producers: George Sunga. George’s introduction to big-time TV came as a San Diego State College student, when he was sent off to Hollywood to do a written production analysis of the network dramatic series, Climax.

The resulting 225-page narrative was an “a-to-z” explanation of what it takes to produce a live network drama series. It was also the launching pad for the stellar career that followed, which began with a bang in CBS Television City’s mail room! Years later, George could look back at the steady upward trail that led him from dispatching trucks and messengers, to stage crew scheduler and on and on, learning with every step. It all brought him to the day he was made the first production supervisor at Television City for such shows as The Smothers Brothers, Password, and Carol O’Connor, and Fred Astaire’s Color Me Red, White and Blue.

But even those achievements weren’t enough for George. He went on to make his biggest mark helping to produce the smash hit sitcoms All in the Family, The Jeffersons, and Good Times, all for Norman Lear. He then moved over to spend the next nine seasons producing Three’s Company, The Ropers, and Three’s A Crowd.

George became the associate producer for the very first TV specials of Carol Channing and Dick Van Dyke. Those landmark shows were followed by a Who’s Who of variety specials by such stars as Sid Caesar, Carol Burnett, Don Rickles, and yes, today’s honoree Carl Reiner.

When it became evident that George’s talent was in demand, he resigned his position at CBS and was named the associate producer for the legendary Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour. After that, the man at the helm gave us some of the finest TV specials in history like Rowan and Martin Bite the Hand That Feeds Them, Of Thee I Sing, starring Carol O’Connor, and Fred Astaire’s Color Me Red, White and Blue.

The list of his accomplishments goes on and on. But now it’s time to say: Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome the newest member of the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters Diamond Circle, George Sunga!

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Guests at the Ralph Edwards table were residents of the MPTF Wasserman Campus: Bob Larkin, Tony Lawrence, George and Mary Watters, Brett Hadley, Stephen Kohler, and PPBer Connie Sawyer. The group was accompanied by Arlene Glassner, senior marketing executive for MPTF, and their driver, Julio Scian. Marcia Minor, an MPTF volunteer, hosted.

In The News

Thousands of Oak Library Services Director Steve Brogden has retired after 24 years overseeing the city’s library system. According to the Ventura County Star, “under Brogden’s tenure, the library has opened a new purpose-built children’s library and expanded its community programs such as One City, One Book, movie screenings, and reading and educational events.” Steve played an instrumental role in the restoration of the Library after heavy damage sustained in the 1994 Northridge earthquake and in the acquisition of the PPB archives that were donated to the Library when they were moved from our former home in Hollywood. For inquiries about the PPB archives now in Ventura County call Jeanette Berard, Special Collections, Thousand Oaks Library, 805-449-2660, extension 7328.

Past PPB President Frank Bresee celebrated his 85th birthday in August with a broadcast on the Yesterday USA Blue Network. On hand with congratulations were friends Alex Trebek, Lizabeth Scott, Kari Clark, and Milt Larsen. The event was produced by Bobbie Bresee with Walden Hughes and Larry Gassman helping with hosting chores.

On August 8th, former PPB President Sam and his wife Grace Lovullo celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary. Along with family and friends the couple was invited by PPBer Mrs. Gene Autry to be her guest in her executive suite at Angel Stadium in Anaheim. This was an appropriate venue since the Angels were playing the Boston Red Sox where Torey Lovullo is bench coach. Torey played second base for the Angels in 1993 and the Lovullos and Autrys have remained close friends ever since.
As a new PPB member, I’d like to recommend a favorite book-author of mine named ROY McSHANE. He writes aviation-theme books which are fascinating - even if you don’t usually read that type of novel.

Roy’s trilogy, HWELTE (a Navajo word meaning fortress or place of refuge) revolves on a little known historical footnote: during the Battle of Stalingrad in 1942 a squadron of female Soviet fighter pilots fought the Luftwaffe, coming up against the best fighters the Nazis had to offer. By chance, one of these female fighter pilots intercepted a crippled American B-25, led it to her air base and saved the bomber pilot’s life. The B-25 pilot’s Navajo grandmother had foretold this event to US Army pilot Chuck Hewitt before he left for war. Hewitt and the Soviet pilot would find their refuge, their Hwelte, in each other.

More fascinating tales by Roy McShane are available. Feel free to contact me at lucamar2@att.net or call: 818-784-4969.

Note: PPBer Frank La Marca was in the 101st Airborn during the Korean War. In his 42 years in broadcasting, Frank worked as an engineer and producer - today he’s a writer’s manager.
This photo was taken at a meeting of the PPB Board of Directors – although we don’t know the exact date, it took place sometime in the early 60s at Sportsmen’s Lodge. Pictured are (front row, left to right): BARBARA FULLER, BILL BALDWIN, ART GILMORE, JEANNE DeVIVIER BROWN, LENOIRE KINGSTON, KEN CARPENTER, ROBERT AHMANSON; (back row) LES TREMAYNE, FRAN ALLISON, unidentified, VICKI RISK, LENA ROMAY, DRESSER DAHLSTEAD, OLAN SOULE, JANET WALDO, unidentified, MARTY HALPERIN, MARIE SAMUELS, HARFIELD WEEDEN, JOHN GUEDEL, HARRY O’CONNOR.

New Members

DAVID SHEEHAN has been a trail-blazer in the world of broadcasting for the past 40 years. His first job was as an entertainment reporter at KNXT. He was the first local newsman to work for two networks simultaneously: America Alive on NBC and The Big News on CBS. At NBC, David produced, wrote, and hosted network specials including Macho Men of the Movies and Hollywood’s Leading Ladies. On Broadway, he produced and camera-directed BOB FOSSE’s Pippin in the early 80’s. He’s the author of numerous magazine articles and has published a novel, Before I Wake with the assistance of HENRY MILLER. David is currently, but casually, developing new projects for syndication, cable, the internet, and new media.

SHERMAN L. WEISS – Some of Sherman’s extensive credits include announcer and associate producer of Spotlight on Youth, segment producer on Hollywood Road to Fame with NTG, writer and announcer on Life is What You Make It on CBS, and producer of TV Teen Theater. He served as chief NCO for AFRS Hollywood and as a newscaster for Voice of America. Currently, Sherman is a voice over actor for radio commercials and corporate videos.

We Remember With Great Admiration

TRENT CHRISTMAN, a former PPB member, had been living in Las Vegas. Trent worked as station manager for NBC in Kona and for McCann Erickson in Honolulu. He was deputy director at AFRTS.

JACK KABATECK grew up in LA, enlisted in the US Army and served as Sergeant of the Guard to General Douglas MacArthur in Seoul, Korea. He graduated from USC with a degree in telecommunications. While applying for a job at KABC-TV in 1952, he met the love of his life, Glady. Jack produced early TV shows, including Criswell Predicts and was featured in the film ED WOOD. He left TV production to sell air time on radio, which would become his career for the next 60 years. He spent over 20 years with Westinghouse Broadcasting as the West Coast sales manager before starting his own company which represented radio stations up and down the coast. Jack was on the boards of the Glendale Symphony, the American Red Cross, and the Boy Scouts.

JOHNNY ROTELLA had a prolific career as a songwriter and was a master of the saxophone, clarinet, and flute. After serving with the 389th Army Service Forces Band during World War II, Johnny hooked up with the RAYMOND SCOTT Orchestra and quickly moved on to the superstar bands of TOMMY DORSEY and BENNY GOODMAN. In addition to his work as a studio musician, playing on the soundtracks of countless movies and hit TV shows, Johnny wrote more than 200 songs including compositions with JOHNNY MERCER, and SAMMY CAHN, with whom he wrote his signature song, Nothing But the Best which was recorded by FRANK SINATRA in the 1960s.

ARTHUR WATKINS was an original PPB charter member when the organization was formed in 1966 and has been a member ever since. He had a career in public relations.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR 2015

Our next Celebrity Luncheons are scheduled on:

Friday, January 23, 2015
Friday, March 20, 2015
Friday, May 15, 2015

PPB Lapel Pins are once again available from GEORGE KNAPP - he’ll be in the lobby of the Sportsmen’s Lodge before our next luncheon, or you can drop by his table. A limited number are available for $5.00 each.

PPB Badges can be ordered from EDDY JO BERNAL at each luncheon, or by sending $10.00 to PPB, PO Box 8673, Calabasas, CA 91372. Include a check for $10.00 - let us know how you’d like your name to appear and if you’d like a clip or a pin on the back.

If you know of a member who is ill or has passed away, please advise PPB’s Membership/Friendship Chair KAY HENLEY by leaving a message at 323-461-2121.

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