

OCTOBER 2014

VOLUME 5 • ISSUE NO. 9

# The Toledo Club topics



## IN THIS ISSUE:

**Dick Cavett's  
World: Life After  
the Spotlight...**

**Guest Speaker  
at the 2014  
President's Dinner**

**GUEST SPEAKER**  
**2014 PRESIDENT'S DINNER**

# MAKING THE MOST OF BRIEF ENCOUNTERS: DICK CAVETT'S WORLD

by Richard Rothrock

Mark Twain once said, "To succeed in life, you need two things: ignorance and confidence." He forgot to mention that you need something else: the right partner. Legendary talk show host, comedian, and author Dick Cavett has been finding the right partners to dance with for most of his life, whether it be the equally legendary *Tonight Show* hosts Jack Paar and Johnny Carson, former president Richard Nixon, or Cavett's wife, best-selling author and business management consultant Martha Rogers, Ph.D. (See sidebar-page 14) Next month, he will be partnering with The Toledo Club as the guest of honor at the President's Dinner on November 20.

Most Americans first noticed Dick Cavett back in the 1960s when he began appearing as a guest on talk shows, commercials, and game shows. His easygoing style and quick wit made a fast impression with American audiences. From 1968 to 1982, he hosted one of the most popular late night talk shows on television. Like Mark Twain and Will Rogers before him, Cavett had the ability to turn a wry eye on the contradictions and hypocrisies inherent in American politics and pop culture. He could make us think and laugh at the same time.

Photos by Grand Lubell

Cavett remains an avid admirer of Twain. "I'm always reading Twain. I have an autographed, not personally to me, complete set of an old edition of his works. You can read Twain for any reason."

Arguably, his most important partnership began over 40 years ago with another brief encounter on the streets of New Orleans. At the time, Martha Rogers was in her first job out of college at an advertising firm. Walking home from work, she spotted two schnauzers in the middle of Beale Street. "I grabbed them by their collars and they were jumping all over me and making a mess of my good clothes. And this pair of tennis shoes walks into my view and this extremely familiar voice says, 'Are these your dogs?' And I said, 'No, are these your dogs?'" They weren't. The two of them spent the next two hours trying to locate the owners and, in the process, a friendship was born. "We just kept in touch over the years," Martha said. "And then we were both single again." They married in 2010 and found, in the words of Twain, marriage gives "something to live for; it will give a new gladness to the sunshine, a new fragrance to the flowers, a new beauty to the earth, a new mystery to life."

Not a bad journey for a boy from Nebraska. Born in the Great Depression and the son of two schoolteachers, Cavett found himself not connecting as a child with the usual public school activities. His interest fell instead on magic. "The stunning moment was when the very first person you do a trick for says, 'My god, how did you do that?' And I loved that theatrical aspect of it. And mastering the stuff and reading the magic magazines and meeting other magicians and going to other magic events and winning a trophy." Among the young magicians he met was an equally young Johnny

Carson. While still a teen, Cavett made his first headline ("Young Lincoln Sharpie Bests Magicians' Group Head") when he defeated the head of the International Brotherhood of Magicians in a magic competition. "He was suicidal," Cavett laughs.

Already there were hints of the public man to come. "I got elected to student council in junior high. When the candidates got up and were supposed to do a little speech explaining why they were good candidates, I wrote a funny poem which got huge laughs. And everybody voted for me, including the other candidates. But I found that student council was stultifying and boring in the extreme." In his senior year of high school, he won the Nebraska state gymnastics championship on the pommel horse. Soon, he headed east to attend Yale University.

By the early 1960s, he was living in New York, working as a copyboy for *Time* magazine. He read that Jack Paar, then host of *The Tonight Show*, was seeking new material for his monologues. Cavett wrote some jokes down, walked over to NBC, happened upon Paar in a hallway, and handed him the jokes. That night, Paar used some on the show and Cavett got hired onto *The Tonight Show* staff. Paar soon had him appearing on the show, as when he translated for 1961 Miss Universe who only spoke German. He also found himself making friends with entertainment legends like Groucho Marx and Stan Laurel, as well with up and comers like Woody Allen and Joan Rivers.

By 1968, Cavett was hosting his own late night talk show. While Johnny Carson's more popular *The Tonight Show* focused on show biz, *The Dick Cavett Show* distinguished itself with a wide variety of guests from the worlds of movies, music, politics, stage and American letters. He often landed guests who would not otherwise

appear on television and could often get them to open up about subjects they would normally not discuss in private, let alone on national television. "Illustrious people and others whom I never expected to meet, would say, 'I don't know how you got me to talk about this. I've never done this before.'"

Audiences tuned in because they were never quite sure what they were going to see. One night, Cavett turned referee as Gore Vidal and Norman Mailer traded insults and nearly came to blows. He played basketball with the Harlem Globetrotters. He had a young soldier named John Kerry discuss the Vietnam War. Cavett became known as "the thinking man's talk show host" and the Cavett show became the cool place to be seen. [Many of the episodes are available on YouTube]

One of his personal favorites was the episode featuring award-winning actor Richard Burton. "Yeah," he says, "We were near the end and I said, 'Would you talk about alcohol?' and it startled him for a moment and it got a laugh at his reaction but then he said, 'If it will do some good, I will.' And he just rivets you."

Unfortunately, certain political views expressed on the show soon got him in hot water with then president of the United States, Richard Nixon. Nixon's disdain for Cavett grew even more when he began devoting more of the show to a rising scandal that was not receiving much coverage in the mainstream press, something called Watergate.

"It never was a major interest of mine," Cavett maintains, "I just wanted to do an entertaining chat show." But as the scandal grew and grew, "Watergate was just too damn interesting to ignore."

Cavett and Watergate have been back in the news this year, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nixon's resignation,

*Continued on page 15*



## MARTHA ROGERS: VISITING WITH THE ONE TO ONE PROPHETESS

by Richard Rothrock

Martha Rogers, Ph.D. is an acclaimed author, business strategist and Founder Emerita of Peppers & Rogers Group, the world's premier customer-centered consulting firm. *Business 2.0* magazine named her one of the 19 "most important business gurus" of the past century. And her amazing career started right here at The Toledo Club. Back in the early 1990s, she was already an award-winning faculty member at Bowling Green State University when she met her professional partner, Don Peppers, at a Toledo Ad Club luncheon at the Club.

"Afterward," Rogers laughs, "he and I had a 90 second conversation and I said, 'I've been talking to my colleagues about this and nobody believes me so we need to do a book on this.' And he said, 'I can't write a book on this. I don't have the time.'" Rogers soon convinced him otherwise ("I'm in the publish or perish world!" she laughs).

The result was *The One To One Future* (1993), an international best seller that sold over a million copies and revolutionized how companies market. Twenty years later, it remains a required tome for business and marketers. Their latest work was *Extreme Trust* (2011).

Rogers believes the innovations of the last twenty years presented by the internet and smartphones have been great for both customers and companies. "It is so easy when you reach a certain age to talk about how great everything was back in the good old days," she says. "But it is interesting and more challenging to think how much better things are now than they were back in the good old days. In a lot of cases, those good old days never did exist.

"The fact that you can get any information you want anywhere you are at anytime you want; now that's pretty amazing. We used to have to have encyclopedias on our shelves in the living room to answer those questions.

"It means that customers can make contact with a company in a way that they couldn't twenty years ago. What we know about companies now is what customers say about them. Back in the day that wasn't true. What we knew was what companies said about themselves.

"But now customers are really changing peoples' opinions about what companies are like. And so what social media really means for companies now is that you have to be more trustworthy than you ever have before. Whether they are getting ahead of the problem. Whether they are giving you recourse for resolving your problem. So that's what I think about the future.

"All of these technologies are somehow going to be better. Then you have Tesla and others opening up all their patents so that everybody will want an electric car. We'll have electric grids everywhere. That's a good thing. When we have 3D printers for everyone, that means nobody is going to be in the manufacturing business anymore. You'll be in the software business because that is what it's going to take to get anything made. But you can make stuff. I think it's all really good."

Rogers is an adjunct professor at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business and is widely published in academic and trade journals. She also blogs for the *Huffington Post*.

and the subject of a new documentary, *Dick Cavett's Watergate*, that aired on PBS. Watergate would provide Cavett with his most interesting platform and his greatest partner to spar with, President Richard Nixon (or as Cavett continues to call him "The Great Unindicted Co-Conspirator").

Cavett views the moment as something that was thrust upon him. "I never once said, 'Let's do more Watergate.' And I never knew until recent weeks how much there was."

Yet his interest in the subject soon earned him a place on Nixon's infamous "Enemies List." A check of the Nixon tapes reveals that the name Dick Cavett comes up 31 times. "Whenever I have an idle moment in the day," Cavett laughs, "I immediately amuse myself by going to YouTube and hear Nixon say to [chief of staff Bob] Haldeman, 'How can we screw Cavett?'"

Cavett concedes that many of his actions didn't help. "When I went to bat for John Lennon not being thrown out of the country after Haldeman had told Nixon that this guy could sway an election, that didn't help. And then doing the Watergate panel in the Watergate hearing room certainly didn't help."

The two "enemies" did manage to come face-to-face once at, of all places, the White House itself. "I was standing in a reception line," Cavett remembers. "An evening of Shakespeare with Nicol Williamson. Mr. Nixon, as it is painful for me to have to call him, greeted my eyes in the reception line with, 'Whose doing your show tonight?' He always had somebody prepare something on each person. And I said, 'Joe Namath is sitting in for me.' And he said, 'How are his knees?' I said I hadn't personally checked but it got a little laugh out of him. It was cordial enough and I moved on to Mrs. Nixon who was a relief from him in every way and just

a delight. I loved her. If only the gods had made her write a book."

He still considers Nixon's resignation as one of the significant moments in his life, but he thinks the players involved still miss the larger picture. "Maybe I've seen too many Frank Capra movies," he says in the documentary, "to hope that one of them in one of these squalid meetings would have said, 'My god, here we are in the [office] of Jefferson, Lincoln, and Washington talking about bugging and kidnapping and prostitutes and wiretapping and all that crap and no one has ever seen this as not the way leaders should lead.' But I'm just a sentimental boy, I suppose."

And what does he think of today's news coverage of the political scene? "People keep saying, 'What do you think of political humor these days? What about Colbert and Stewart?' I think it is probably sadly true that most of the youth who know nothing preceding their birthdate, do get most of their news from Stewart, Colbert, Kimmel, Fallon, as I'm sure the evening news is a little too middle-aged for their tastes. There's always a warm story about a puppy or a kitty or a baby when it seems like the time could be spent, I mean, there must be something happening in other countries."

Since his talk show ended, Cavett has remained active writing four books, making regular TV appearances, and even having cameos in movies such as *Beetlejuice* (1988) and *Forrest Gump* (1994). How does he continue to be active at age 77? Cavett still writes a column for *The New York Times*. Earlier this year, he appeared on Broadway in the play *Hellman v. McCarthy*.

This fall, he published a book collection of the *Times* columns entitled *Brief Encounters*. When asked if the title is a reference to the classic Noel Coward movie, Cavett demurs. "No, because I just added an 's' to his [title] which is all I dare do to his wonderful work."

He likes the book. "It's got a lot of great, really outrageous stuff in it, some eyebrow raising, some gossipy, some attempts at profundities."

Cavett and Rogers have formed a comfortable pair who continue to remain active in their fields. What do they most admire about each other? "It would take an hour to even scratch the surface," he says.

"That's a really long list for me," Martha smiles. "I really do feel very lucky to have found somebody who is so funny and so gets what I'm doing and we just have a lot in common."

Again, not bad for a small town Nebraska boy.

"And I did all of that without ever being tall," he laughs. "I remember there was a dance in high school and a girl and a boy met in front of me and she looked up at him and said, 'Oooooo, tall.' And I thought, 'That's all it takes?'"

"I disagree," Martha says, "He's the biggest man I ever knew."

