

Q&A: NAB DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD WINNER

MAKING MUCH OF MOORE

Seven-time Emmy Award-winning actress Mary Tyler Moore will be honored at the NAB Show with the organization's grandest prize, the Distinguished Service Award, which recognizes those who have made "significant and lasting contributions to the broadcasting industry." Ms. Moore is being honored for six decades of outstanding work as an actress, comedian, producer and TV personality. From her Emmy-winning start on "The Dick Van Dyke Show" to her famous alter ego Mary Richards on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," Ms. Moore is one of the world's most beloved and enduring TV stars.

"Mary Tyler Moore is a television icon who not only entertained millions of Americans week after week with her quick humor and amazing talent, but inspired many women of her generation to pursue careers in broadcasting, journalism and related fields," said NAB President-CEO David Rehr.

Ms. Moore spoke with *TelevisionWeek* special correspondent Allison J. Waldman about her career, as well as her latest book and the NAB honor.

TelevisionWeek: What is your reaction to receiving this award at the NAB show?

Mary Tyler Moore: Well, I am delighted and stunned. It's the kind of event that you know about and you sometimes participate in, but you never think that you are going to be honored. It's a real compliment.

TVWeek: You have created characters that have become historic, *Laura Petrie* and *Mary Richards*...

Ms. Moore: I can't take credit for that. They were created by people that I worked with who helped to make this event of TV history possible, and I am so thrilled to have been around while everybody did their share of the work.



TVWeek: I read a quote in which you said you just play you. But I see a big difference in your characters. You're an actress.

Ms. Moore: I think of myself as an actress, but what I meant when I said that was that on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," I was playing me. Mary. It still involved a good sense of timing, knowledge of how a scene should be played, and that doesn't come by most of us easily, but in my case, I knew growing up that I was funny. My mother and father were very funny people and I had a sense of humor inculcated in me right from the very beginning.

TVWeek: *Laura Petrie* on "The Dick Van Dyke Show" wasn't supposed to be funny. She was going to be the sidekick, and yet as the show evolved, it became something else...

Ms. Moore: Right, it did. I was hired to be the straight man for Dick, but in spending time together, all of us, the director and Carl [Reiner], everybody, you begin to sense things about your co-workers and you notice strong points. Weak points, too. It was about the middle of the first year when Carl began to see that there was the potential for comedy in me, not just in setting up Dick for comedy, which I would have been thrilled with for the rest of my life. But I was awfully glad to get the experience of creating laughter myself.

TVWeek: Do you have an all-time favorite "Van Dyke" episode?

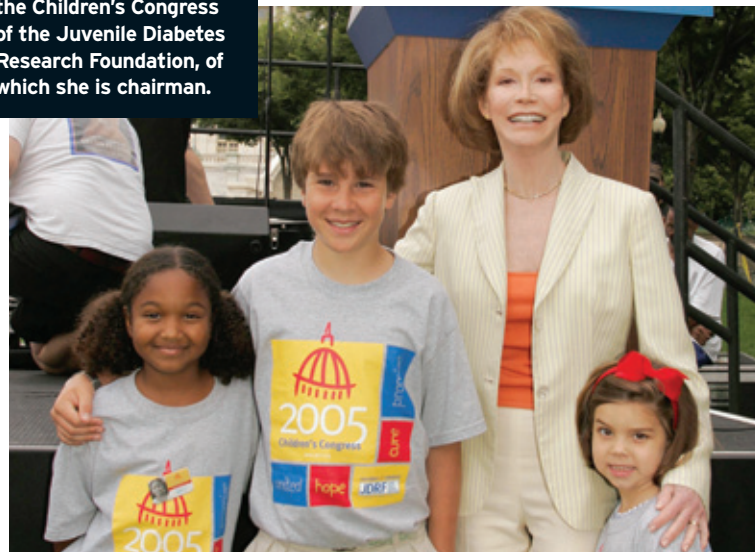
Ms. Moore: It was probably one of the first shows that Carl wrote for me to dabble in being the center of the laughter, "The Curious Thing About Women." In the story, Laura had this predilection for opening Rob's mail. So he sent this life raft that was not yet blown up in the mail, in a normal-size box, and when it arrived, I pulled at it and gnawed at the string until it opened and there was the evidence of how large my curiosity was—this giant inflatable raft. He comes home and I have this thing on the floor, I'm on my knees trying to grapple with it, trying to get it into a hiding place. I finally back up in the closet. It was such a ludicrous setup.

TVWeek: What was it like working with writer-director James L. Brooks on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" compared with *Carl*?

Ms. Moore: For one thing, Carl Reiner is a comedian. He can stand up with the best of them to do his performing. So that colors his personality. Jim is a very funny, witty man who is not used to standing up and getting his own laughs. It's a subtler experience with somebody like Jim. They're both very different in their approaches, and equally talented.

TVWeek: When "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" first came on the air, there

HELPING KIDS Moore at the Children's Congress of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, of which she is chairman.



were't great expectations that this was going to be a revolutionary sitcom.

Ms. Moore: No. As a matter of fact, everybody thought it was going to be a disaster.

TVWeek: And yet the casting and the chemistry and the characters that they put around you... and the writing, it all fell into place. Were you surprised by the success?

Ms. Moore: Oh, gosh, I can talk myself into being as strong as I need to be depending on the situation, whether it's personal or career-oriented, but I just knew that this was going to be a very good show. I didn't take it to the extent of saying to myself that this is going to be a hit, I just knew it was going to be good. Then the rest of it you can't really control.

TVWeek: Is your new book "Growing Up Again: Life, Loves and, Oh Yeah, Diabetes" a follow-up to your previous memoir?

Ms. Moore: It isn't, although it is autobiographical. But it came about because the senior editor at St. Martin's Press has a daughter who was just going off to college [who is] diabetic, and she was very nervous about it. It was a big step to leave home anyway, but to leave home and you're a diabetic, it's extra threatening potentially, and as the date for her departure grew nearer, she said to her dad, "I wish there was a book about diabetes that isn't a how-to, but rather the confidences of a friend who has diabetes. Somebody who could say to me, I went through that and here's what happened to me, what I felt and what I learned."

TVWeek: And he thought of you?

Ms. Moore: Phil Revson called me and told me his situation with his daughter and asked if I would be interested. I am the chairman of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and this seemed a great extension of that. I knew immediately what she was talking about. She wanted a girlfriend. I wanted to share my experiences with her and others, not in a "this is what you should do" method, but more of a, "Look, this is where I was and this is what happened and this is how I am now."

TVWeek: What's the toughest part of living with diabetes?

Ms. Moore: The never-endingness of it. Science has developed such wonderful advances, like now there is an artificial pancreas, but living with diabetes, you can't live as spontaneously as you like to...

TVWeek: You have some interesting footnotes in your career; like starring in the musical version of "Breakfast at Tiffany's" on Broadway, which was a legendary flop...

Ms. Moore: Yes, it was. It was the biggest devastation of my life up to that point. It was not the best time in the career of writer Abe Burrows. He was not having a good time with his health at that point, and I think that was the biggest problem. It taught us all a lesson about never being able to count on anything. There's no sure thing in show business.

TVWeek: What about the movie musical "Thoroughly Modern Millie"?

Ms. Moore: It was great fun. I loved Julie Andrews and still do. We don't see each other very often, but when we do it's like no time has elapsed. I had a really tough time with the director, George Roy Hill. He was a brilliant director... but he did not cast me in that movie. It was a Universal picture and they put me in the movie, so he had to live with me, never feeling that I was right for the role of Miss Dorothy. He thought of me as Laura Petrie; his opinion was based on who I played on TV.

TVWeek: He didn't realize you could play other kinds of characters?

Ms. Moore: Exactly. He really made me do my homework. He made me watch a lot of Dorothy and Lillian Gish silent movies. That gave me a start for how to play her.

TVWeek: Was it under the same Universal contract that cast you as a nun opposite Elvis Presley in "Change of Habit"?

Ms. Moore: Yes, yes. That didn't work out too well for me, but "Thoroughly Modern Millie" did. With Elvis, I was playing a nun, but they were telling me to have some sexual tension. Elvis Presley said long after we made the movie, "I slept with every one of my leading ladies except one." And I know who the one is! I still wonder what in the world I was thinking about. ■

