

Big Chuck!

By Helen Marketti



We all have our favorite television programs. Depending on what generation we are part of there is usually a show that immediately brings us back to how old we were, what we were doing and any family traditions we may have had.

Local programs often have an extra element where the cast and crew are accessible. We may see them appearing at a city event or even shopping at the grocery store.

Chuck Schodowski is better known as "Big Chuck" of the Cleveland comedy duo Big Chuck and Lil' John. There was also Hoolihan and Big Chuck

and before that there was Ghouardi whom Chuck appeared with in numerous skits and appearances. So depending on your generation and memories you can see the common denominator of who continued to call the Cleveland area his home.

Retiring in 2007 Chuck has since taken a hilarious and reflective look back with his book "Big Chuck! My Favorite Stories from 47 Years on Cleveland TV" (Gray & Company, Publishers).

Beginning as a camera man at Channel 3 and eventually transitioning over to Channel 8 Chuck has held positions from writer, engineer, director and producer. He has worked behind the scenes and in front of the camera.

Chuck was originally coaxed in front of the camera by Ghouardi (Ernie Anderson) during the 1960s. Ernie thought Chuck was funny and should be part of the show. They became good friends during that time.

Working with Ernie was an adventure in performance, comedy and life. "Ernie taught me not to be afraid to do something," recalls Chuck. "He said to do what I wanted and not ask permission first. If something didn't work out then he advised me to say, 'I'll never do it again.'"

When Ernie moved to Los Angeles to begin the next phase of his career Bob Wells came aboard with Chuck. They became known as Hoolihan and Big Chuck.

With an adventurous dare devil spirit similar to Ernie in some ways plus having the gift of gab in any situation Hoolihan became an ideal comedy partner for Chuck. "Working with Hoolie (Bob) gave me a sense of comedy that I never had," recalls Chuck. "He could mug for the camera, get a

point across, talk about anything and still be funny with a straight face."

Eventually Hoolihan moved away from the Cleveland area to focus on other career interests. Filling in the space to continue the comedy duo tradition was John Rinaldi (Lil' John). Chuck said, "With John... what you see is what you get. He is bubbly and fun loving. He always makes kids and adults laugh. He has used his shorter height to his advantage."

Working long hours at Channel 8 also provided numerous opportunities to work with celebrities, sports figures and television personalities. "I was never in awe or intimidated by them," remembers Chuck. "To me they were just people. I never treated anyone differently because of who they were."

Reading the book is an entertaining journey as Chuck takes you with him from the beginning to where he is at now. There are plenty of laughs along the way with cast, crew, celebrities and every day life.

"I wrote 98% of the skits," said Chuck. "I had a knack of finding something funny that could happen in most life situations. We would also do skits from commercials and stuff like that to make them funny. I enjoyed writing, producing and directing. I liked being able to direct someone in a longer skit that I wasn't in. I also enjoyed working on half hour specials."

Looking back over the years of working in television there always seemed to be the right people coming along at the right time. "Its amazing how many things kept it all going," recalls Chuck. "I think we lasted for so many years because we were able to change with the times. I seemed to have had a subconscious sense that comedy was changing. The audience was changing too. I started to write shorter skits and get to the punch line faster."

Big Chuck and Lil' John still make appearances and have already been booked for several events over the summer. Other current projects for Chuck include putting together a "Best of" DVD which will include a lot of the older skits from the early days.

"I think there is a retro thing going on where even the young people are interested in the stuff we did back in the 60s and 70s," said Chuck.

There is also a fan web site dedicated to Big Chuck and Lil' John where fans can see some of the early skits along with photos, stories and more.

"I always knew a lot of people watched our show because of the ratings," said Chuck. "But I never realized to what extent until I started doing the book signings. People would tell me their family watched us every Friday night and what it meant to them. Some of them would have tears in their eyes as they talked about a parent who had always enjoyed watching the show. I feel so gratified to be part of this. I am having a great ego trip. When I walk into a room people applaud and cheer. I feel like a 74 year old rock star."

Big Chuck! is available at Amazon.com and local area book stores.

Fan web site: www.bigchuckandliljohn.com

Photo credits: From the book "Big Chuck!" by Chuck Schodowski (with Tom Feran)

Photo courtesy Chuck Schodowski



Big Chuck & Lil John

Make Healthy Choices in 2009

By: Dr. Marc Naderer

A new year brings resolutions, and several people usually plan on eating better, exercising, and losing weight. Some of you may have forgotten your resolution or given up, but this article provides some tips for making healthy choices.

The key to weight loss is burning more calories than you consume. There are no magic pills available to consistently make people lose weight. Most over-the-counter diet pills are not regulated by the FDA. The success stories from the pills are always accompanied by fine print that states: "Results not typical. Use as part of a healthy diet and exercise."

There are several diets available and picking the right one can be difficult. Many diets involve radically changing the way you eat or giving up the types of food you eat on a daily basis. Most of these diets work but some people lose weight faster than others. Healthy diets do not produce instant results. Set small goals to help you stick with your diet. Many diets will have the same results at the end of one year. Just remember that going back to your old diet once you've lost weight will cause the weight to return. Try to choose a diet that you can make permanent.

Try to think of a diet as a lifestyle change. The key is to watch portion size and calorie intake. A diet I usually recommend is Weight Watchers. You are able to eat a variety of foods but need to make good choices. Avoid calories from beverages except milk which should be skim milk. Be aware that sports drinks such as Gatorade or Propel tend to be high in sugar and calories. Avoid simple sugars in cookies and candies. Also avoid fried foods or fatty foods. Try to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grain.

Almost everyone should have some form of regular aerobic exercise. You want to raise your heart rate and keep it up for 30 minutes a day 5-6 days per week. Some forms or aerobic exercise include brisk walking, biking, swimming, or jogging. Always ask your doctor if you are not sure if you are able to exercise. Choose a diet and exercise program that you can enjoy. Changing your eating and exercise habits will give you more energy, help you feel better, and help lose weight. Overall, you will enjoy a healthier lifestyle.

Doctor Naderer is part of Great Lakes Physicians with an office in Clyde, Ohio. He is a board certified Family Physician and is currently accepting new patients. 419-547-0340.

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