

Helen Marketti's Music Corner



By Helen R. Marketti



An Interview with Legendary Comedian Rich Little

Rich Little is an iconic entertainer whose celebrity and politician impersonations have been a hilarious comic relief for over 50 years. Originally from Ottawa, Ontario, Canada and known as "The Man of a Thousand Voices," Rich is a spry 82-year-old who is back to entertaining the masses at The Tropicana in Las Vegas.

During a telephone interview from Las Vegas, Rich shared his experience of how he got started with impersonations which lead to a life-long career. "When I was young, there were many actors and comedians that I had always admired. Jack Benny and George Burns were two of my favorites. I loved Jimmy Stewart as an actor. There was no one better than him. Years later I was able to work with the same people I had admired which was great. It was an honor," said Rich. "The first people that I started imitating were my teachers. If a teacher asked me a question, I would answer them imitating their voice. I usually gave the wrong answer, too. They eventually got wise to what I was doing and gradually stopped calling on me which worked in my favor!"

"The very first celebrity I imitated was Jimmy Stewart. I got to know him quite well. He was



a wonderful man with a great sense of humor. When I was a kid, I took my fifty-dollar tape recorder and snuck it into the movie theatre. I went to see Jimmy Stewart in the movie, The Far Country (1954) which was a western. I walked behind the screen and plugged in my little tape recorder and taped the movie because I wanted to practice his voice. One of the ushers found out what I was

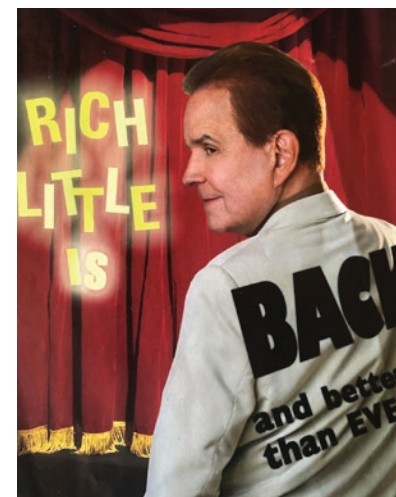
doing and threw me out of the theatre and threw my tape recorder behind me," remembers Rich.

"I started out imitating people to amuse my friends and people in the neighborhood. I had never considered that to be a full-time line of work, however. But of course, that came later. Truthfully, I had never thought about becoming a comedian but I suppose if you're doing impersonations, then you are a comedian."

Rich has been doing his stand-up comedy routine at The Tropicana in Las Vegas for the last five years. "I am always working on my act," he said. "I am always trying to improve it. It's a constant

battle to keep up to date with everything that is going on. I enjoy what I do and right now I am impersonating President Joe Biden quite a bit."

Rich has written a book, "Little by Little: People I've Known and Been" (7th Mind Publishing, 2016) where he shares fond memories of celebrities and politicians he has known throughout the years. One of Rich Little's closest friends was former President Ronald Regan. "Ronald Regan was the best," remembers Rich. "I knew him for a long time and had been invited to The White House several times. Ronald told me once, (Ronald Regan voice) "Rich, I think you do me better than I do. As a matter of fact, when I pass away, they should bury you."



In 2010, Rich Little officially became a United States citizen. At the swearing in ceremony, the judge asked Rich to speak in a John Wayne voice which he happily obliged.

Rich Little shows no signs of slowing down as new generations of fans are discovering his humor and enjoying his shows. "I've had a great career and it's still going strong. I am quite happy."

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