True Heroes Among Us, The One and Only Valerie Harper

By Adrienne Papp | March 14, 2013

There was a lavish event on December 2, 2012 that in some ways set aside as an opening to the Award Seasons: the most exciting months in Hollywood, but probably around the world, as more than a billion people tuned in this year just during the Oscar ceremony alone.

The Caucus for Producers, Writers and Directors Hosts its Annual Award Dinner for the Biggest Names in Hollywood every year. This year the Host of this precious evening was the beautiful and vibrant Valerie Harper.

People say the most memorable event in their lives is their wedding. For me, the indescribable excitement and honor of dining in a closed setting with the makers and shakers of Hollywood topped it all. These larger-than-life icons with paramount creativity make the world go around. Truth to be told, the actors only bring the work of the writers, producers and directors to life. I wasn’t really intimidated by such legendary Industry names as Valerie Harper, Jay Roach, Gale Anne Hurd, Graham Yost, Stan Lathan and Two and a Half Men director James Widdoes, Steven Spielberg to name just a few of the attendees.

For me being surrounded with the most creative people on the planet was THE moment of my life, for Valerie Harper that most special moment, as interviewed on Pierce Morgan Tonight, was the moment she locked eyes with her husband for life and when her husband suggested to adopt a baby, which they did together.

Valerie was not only kind to me in a down to earth, simple, and loving way with that famous beautiful big smile on her face, but she also treated me as her equal, and even shared her own personal email address with me. That is who she is! Einstein once said: “Only a life lived for others is worth living” I believe Valerie is the living example of that.

She is best known for her roles as Rhoda Morgenstern on the 1970s television series, The Mary Tyler Moore Show, and its spin-off, Rhoda, and later as Valerie Hogan on Valerie. Her Canadian-born mother, Iva (née McConnell), was a nurse, and her father, Howard Donald Harper, was a couch. During the interview with Morgan she thanked her parents for her well-rounded personality that she feels she got from them. I believe Valerie is one of our greatest humanitarians in the World. Although Howard Donald Harper, was a couch. During the interview with Morgan she thanked her parents for her well-rounded personality that she feels she got from them. I believe Valerie is one of our greatest humanitarians in the World. Although Howard Donald Harper, was a couch. During the interview with Morgan she thanked her parents for her well-rounded personality that she feels she got from them. I believe Valerie is one of our greatest humanitarians in the World.

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The Caucus dinner that Valerie hosted so vivaciously is viewed as a leader of the creative Television community, an organization that promotes the best-broadcast entertainment products for a global audience. It counts among its membership the best of broadcast television’s creative content providers, including the top 150 Television producers, writers, directors, and program directors of prime-time, daytime and children’s programming. The event was produced by Caucus Steering Committee Members Co-Chair Vin DiBona and Treasurer Lee Miller. The awards dinner chair was Norman Powell. The president is Chuck Fries, with whom I had a few minutes to talk about the Caucus, stated that over one million dollars had been awarded to support and mentor new filmmakers, while promoting and protecting the artistic rights of its creative community.

Valerie Harper hosted this grand event with great flair and was most certainly the perfect match as a four-time Emmy winner, and a Tony nominated legend. She also had numerous performances on Broadway and recently The Simpsons. “This is a wonderful event,” Harper said in a private interview. “They don’t open this up to just anyone. This is for the people who make the entertainment, and it’s also about bringing along new talent and young people.”

When asked how she copes so well with her prognosis, she responded, “I am just putting one food in front of the other” She expressed the feeling she had to come out and talk about her condition and life until she can. “I am not in a wheel chair, she added. She wanted people to understand that yes, death is inevitable and none of us is getting out of it alive, we are all in it together, but then “do not get stuck with this recognition, just live in the moment. Don’t be thinking about your death way before your death, that is what I am really trying to share,” Valerie said.

She also thanked all of us for sending her emails and caring for her in many ways. Val said, “she was not able to respond to all of us just yet because she has been touring and doing lots and lots of interviews.”

To most people a terrifying diagnosis like this would be devastating, yet Valerie is taking it in such a uniquely different and positive way that really none of us has seen before. Where does she get the strength from? She looks at her life as a blessing, and looking back realizes that “she had a lot of great fun, and if we had less fear and resistance to death, life would be happier and the moments of our lives would be richer”

Although People’s magazine said she had 3 months to live, oncologists really do not say that. They say 3 months or 6 or maybe a week. They don’t know.

She also added that “she is living more responsibly, and every American should have health insurance and we should work on this until it is accomplished. Because the stress left on the family is just enormous. “I could not agree with this more!” she pointed out that “people need to get early testing, and I tell people to keep their chin up.”

And, when asked about what she wants to achieve before she goes? “Just do not go to your funeral or a loved one’s funeral until the day of the funeral. Because then you miss the life that you have left,” she responded.

She thanked her husband for being so terrific and supportive not only throughout her life and their happy marriage together, but also during these times. She really teared up when expressing her love for everyone around her and the outpouring of their concern and love, their offers of care. I will get back to all those wonderful folks who are sending me well wishes. Death is out there for all of us, but there are other ways to handle this not just by sitting around. I am just feeling love”

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And when the question about how she would like to be remembered came up, she said: “Valerie was up from the couch. I was positive and got a great deal of life. Valerie is the greatest inspiration, we have ever seen. I true hero who knows who she really is. Thank you Valerie from all of us!

Adrienne Papp is President of Atlantic Publicity and is the member of the International Press Academy.

Photography by Angelo Rosati.
Adrienne Papp Arriving to the 2012 Caucus Dinner Hosted by Valerie Harper

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