

LET'S TALK

Reader admires stage, screen actor Hal Holbrook

By Taylor Michaels

Q: I'd like to know about Hal Holbrook. I have always admired him. I'd like to know where he was born and anything about him. Also, where could we write to him?—Audrey Clark, Park Falls, Wis.

A: Holbrook was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on Feb. 17, 1925. His parents abandoned him when he was two years old and he spent what he calls "Huck Finnish summers" growing up. Perhaps it gave some special insight into Mark Twain, at any rate, his one-man show about the 19th-century humorist, *Mark Twain Tonight!*, is one of the most successful solo theatrical productions in history. Holbrook has performed it more than 2,000 times in the United States and abroad. The actor conceived the idea for the show during leaner years to give himself an alternative to working at Macy's. He performed it in 1955 in San Francisco and made a hit with it off-Broadway in 1959. Holbrook has appeared in numerous other stage productions, films and television programs, including *Designing Women*, on which he appeared with his wife, Dixie Carter, and the current hit *Evening Shade*. The marriage to Carter is his third; he has two children from previous marriages.



Hal Holbrook

Holbrook's agent has asked that his address not be published.

Q: Can you provide me with an address at which I can reach Phil Donahue?—Gary McKinley, Iberia, Mo.

A: Write to Donahue care of his show at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y., 10112.

Q: I think Robert De Niro is a great actor. I was wondering if you could give me some information about him.—Kelly Stevens, Fairfield, Ohio.

A: De Niro was born in New York on Aug. 17, 1943. His parents separated when he was two. As a child, he was nervous and a loner. When he was 16 years old, he discovered acting. For the next 14 years, he appeared in many low-budget films and then was "discovered" after his performance in *Hang the Drum Slowly*. De Niro is very particular about the parts he chooses. He won the Best Actor Academy Award for his performance in the 1981 film *Raging Bull*. He is currently appearing in the remake of *Cape Fear* with Nick Nolte and Jessica Lange. He has two children from two previous marriages.

Q: May I please have the name of the breed of the dog called Dreyfuss in *Empty Nest*?—Ann Mattioli, Columbus, Miss.

A: The publicity agency for *Empty Nest* was happy to comply with your request for information about "Dreyfuss." His real name is Bear, and he is of mixed ancestry: part St. Bernard, part Golden Retriever. Bear was born into a show business family. His father, Boomer, was featured in the series *Father Murphy* and the feature film *Summer Rental*. His sister, Bodi, was in the film *Steel Dawn*. Bear is no stranger to the camera, his film credits include *Witching Hour* and a lesser-known dog-training film, in which he co-starred with his trainer. Originally, there were two dogs playing Dreyfuss in *Empty Nest*: Bear and Bully. If one got tired, the other one stepped in. Currently, Bear is the only dog playing Dreyfuss.

Q: I see on Entertainment Tonight that Leeza Gibbons is expecting. When did she marry again? I know she has a daughter by a previous marriage.—Betty Helvorsen, Sedona, Ariz.

A: Gibbons was married on Feb. 14, 1991, in her second trip to the altar. The baby is due on Feb. 14, 1992.

Send your questions about the world of entertainment in Let's Talk, Features Dept., P.O. Box 961009, Fort Worth, Texas, 76161-1009.

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