

From West Plains, Missouri

Dick Van Dyke, actor, comedian, dancer, writer, producer, and aspiring minister

Richard Wayne Van Dyke (born December 13, 1925) is an American actor, comedian, singer, dancer, writer, and producer.

Van Dyke was born on December 13, 1925, in West Plains, Missouri. He grew up in Danville, Illinois. He is the older brother of actor Jerry Van Dyke (1931–2018), who is best known for a role on the TV series *Coach*.

Van Dyke was the recipient of five Primetime Emmys, a Tony, and a Grammy Award, and was inducted into the Television Hall of Fame in 1995. He received the Screen Actors Guild's highest honor, the SAG Life Achievement Award, in 2013. He has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 7021 Hollywood Boulevard and has also been recognized as a Disney Legend.

Van Dyke's mother's family was very religious, and for a brief period in his youth, he considered a career in ministry, although a drama class in high school convinced him that his true calling was as a professional entertainer. In his autobiography, he wrote, "I suppose that I never completely gave up my childhood idea of being a minister. Only the medium and the message changed. I have still endeavored to touch people's souls, to raise their spirits and put smiles on their faces." Even after the launch of his career as an entertainer, he taught Sunday school in the Presbyterian Church, where he was an elder, and he continued to read such theologians as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who helped explain in practical terms the relevance of religion in everyday life.

Van Dyke left high school in 1944, his senior year, intending to join the United States Army Air Forces for pilot training during World War II. Denied enlistment several times for being underweight, he was eventually accepted for service as a radio announcer before transferring to the Special Services and entertaining troops in the continental United States. He received his high school diploma in 2004.

Van Dyke's start in television was first as a single comedian and emcee of a comedy program. Van Dyke's first network TV appearance was with Dennis James on James' *Chance of a Lifetime* in 1954. He later appeared in episodes of *The Phil Silvers Show* during its 1957–58 season. He also appeared early in his career on ABC's *The Pat Boone Chevy Showroom* and NBC's *The Polly Bergen Show*. During this time a friend from the Army was working as an executive for CBS television and recommended Van Dyke to that network. Out of this came a seven-year contract with the network.

From 1961 to 1966, Van Dyke starred in the CBS sitcom *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, in which he portrayed a comedy writer named Rob Petrie. Originally the show was supposed to have Carl Reiner as the lead but CBS insisted on recasting and Reiner chose Van Dyke to replace him in the role. Complementing Van Dyke was a veteran cast of comic actors including Rose Marie, Morey Amsterdam, Jerry Paris, Ann Morgan Guilbert, Richard Deacon, and Carl Reiner (as Alan Brady), as well as twenty-three-year-old Mary Tyler Moore, who played Rob's wife Laura Petrie. Van Dyke won three Emmy Awards as Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series, and the series received four Emmy Awards as Outstanding Comedy Series.



PHOTO BY GAGE SKIDMORE

Dick Van Dyke, 2017.

On February 12, 1948, while appearing at the Chapman Park Hotel on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles, he and the former Margerie Willett were married on the radio show *Bride and Groom*. They had four children: Christian, Barry, Stacy, and Carrie Beth. They divorced in 1984 after a long separation. On February 29, 2012, at the age of 86, Van Dyke married 40-year-old make-up artist Arlene Silver. Van Dyke resides in Malibu, California. ■

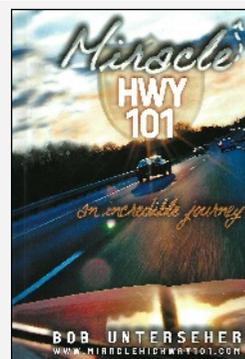
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