

Rodney Dangerfield interviewed by Frank T. Csongos

Contributed by Rodney Dangerfield, Frank T. Csongos

Â Â Rodney Dangerfield
Comedian tells key
to his success
By FRANK T. CSONGOS

PITTSBURGH (UPI) - "The world loves a-loser," said comedian Rodney Dangerfield, sipping his extra dry martini. "You don't identify with winners because in real life everyone believes he is a loser."

At 53, Dangerfield ought to know. His unique brand of "I don't get no respect, at all" humor has made him a success on television and a popular night club comedian.

But it wasn't always like that.

"I had a terribly rough life when I was young," Dangerfield said shortly before a nightclub appearance. "I never did get respect, you know what I mean. Other kids looked down on me. I came from a split home. My mother and I moved into a classy neighborhood in Kew Gardens, New York, when I was a teen-ager. I experienced some indirect form of anti-semitism at school. I'm no longer bitter about it. Everybody has scars.

"I've tried everything. I walked dogs for a couple of bucks a week. Sold ice cream on the beach. I was a singing waiter. I moved furniture and delivered groceries. I was so poor I used to buy yesterday's donuts for half price.

"Later when I became a comedian I started to tell everybody that I never get no respect. No respect at all. And, you know it's sort of funny, ever since then I am getting respect."

Dangerfield said his rough childhood had made a lasting impact on his humor which he described as "just the opposite of insult comedian Don Rickles.

"It's true that I play a character when I'm on television or performing in Vegas," Dangerfield explained. "But part of it is me. And the rejection and failure is universal. Everyone has been rejected at one point in time. So you can identify with a loser.

"A true story. I told a girl once, honey let's get married. Let's run away. She said: you go. You see, with that you can identify. Because nobody scores all the time."

He ordered another martini and lit a cigarette.

"Comedy is a camouflage for depression. Children used to sing and dance in concentration camps in World War II.

"I try to hide my insecurity by cracking jokes. I look at life so seriously. I'm a perfectionist. But you realize there are so many imperfections. My analyst tells me -'Rodney, try to find perfection in your work.'"

He lit another cigarette.

"So I'm a success now. It hasn't changed me. You can't change because you are a product of your childhood and your environment.

I don't buy yesterday's donuts anymore. But sometimes I tell myself—you don't deserve all that luxury."

Dangerfield was ready to get a steam bath and freshen up for his show. He said he wanted to lose 15 pounds so doctors can operate on his hernia next month.

A couple came over to the table to take his picture. The camera flashed.

"I'll be in somebody's basement," Dangerfield said.