

Richard O. Linke New Jersey Boy In Mayberry

He has been called "The man who made Mayberry," in reference to the fictional North Carolina town made famous by *The Andy Griffith Show*. If you are not familiar with 1960s series, it's must see television. Rent it, stream it, borrow it, but just watch it.

The comedy show features Griffith as the easy-going sheriff in a small town. He usually solves any problems that arise in an old fashion folksy style. There is an especially exciting episode where Sheriff Andy meets Old Lady Crump.

But what does this have to do with Richard? Well, Linke discovered Griffith. Andy had made a comedy recording entitled "What It Was, Was Football." Linke was captivated by Andy's down-home style and delivery. He felt as though he could make something of this southern boy. And that he did.

Linke became Andy Griffith's personal manager. He was booked appearances for him here and there, he was eventually introduced to Sheldon Leonard and *The Andy Griffith Show* was born. Leonard was the shows producer and Linke was associate producer.

Some of Linke's other clients were Jim Nabors (Gomer Pyle), Frankie Avalon, Jerry Van Dyke, and Bobby Vinton. He owes his success to hard work and luck. He is quoted as saying: "The harder I work, the luckier I get."

Jack Ellis, who has had a long association with Ohio University, including Alumni Relations director, recalled a story about Linke's parents. "I remember a story he told me about his father, who came from Germany, and his mother, who came from Austria. They came to America to enjoy the freedom and the capitalist opportunities. They got into the iron and steel business. His mother would iron and his father would steal. I got



totally sucked into the story, until the punch line." You have to have a sense of humor in show business.

Richard Linke was born in New Jersey. He entered OU in 1937 to join a couple of his high school buddies but was ready to drop out after the first semester due to poor grades. His mother talked him into staying. He became a good student and later graduated with a journalism degree in 1941. He worked here at the Athens Messenger as a student reporter.

Linke considered his college years a turning point in his life. And he has never forgotten OU's positive influence. As a matter of fact, Richard (his friends call him Dick, so we will call him Dick) loved Athens and Ohio University so much, he returned for OU's Homecoming weekend for more than 44 years.

In 1991, he moved with his wife, Bettina, from the fast lane of Los Angeles to the small college town of Athens. Dick called Athens his home. His wife, Bettina, was as a lead dancer in top Las Vegas shows. She is quoted as saying: "Dick, we've had all the glitz and glamour we need." Bettina was very content and happy in Athens as she earned a Bachelor's degree at OU.



Dick enjoyed teaching classes in Public Relations at OU for a number of years. They bought a house on Longview Heights. The family would eventually move to Hawaii as Dick couldn't take Athens winters.

This all begs the question: Why would a big shot Hollywood mover and shaker, who could live anywhere in the world, want to live in our little corner of Ohio? Maybe he liked the people. Maybe he liked the hills and the nature. Maybe he liked the small town feel. Or maybe it's because Athens reminded him of Mayberry.