

Rauh: A face you can't forget

By IRIS M. SAMSON
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He has one of the most recognizable faces in Pittsburgh. When you meet him, you know you've seen him somewhere — perhaps the TV commercial with the

Steelers' Jerome Bettis? Or in the film, "Inspector Gadget?" Or could it have been Richard E. Rauh you saw, in one of the many productions at Little Lake Theater, City Theatre or the Pittsburgh Playhouse?

Rauh, the son of one of Pittsburgh's acting legends, Helen Wayne Rauh, is a "celeb" in his own right. An accomplished actor, talented teacher and generous philanthropist, Rauh has been a fixture in the Pittsburgh acting scene for over 30 years.

With a mother like his, you'd almost expect him to be an actor, but "she never pushed me into this profession," Rauh, warm and friendly, begins.

"My mother acted for 40 years," he says. "I checked the Playhouse records" — a theater which his father, Richard S. Rauh, helped launch — "and found out she was back on the stage a year after I was born."

The young Rauh began performing at a tender age. "When I was at Shadyside grade school, I did plays," he smiles. By the time Rauh got to high school, however, "I wasn't interested in acting."

When Rauh was ready to graduate, he realized he was at a "crossroads. My mother wanted me to go to Carnegie Tech," to study drama. "They told me I had to prepare a monologue," and he was petrified. "My mother told me she'd help me, but I turned her down, and applied to Pitt instead.

"It was a major mistake," in terms of advancing his acting career. But he did find his "voice," as the deejay of the Pitt's first radio station. "I was a founder," he smiles, "and went on the air for the first time in January, 1962."

When Rauh graduated, acting was still not on his mind. Instead, he went back to school for his master's in English from Pitt, which he received in 1964. He started working on his Ph.D.

In 1965, the acting bug bit Rauh. He "read for a part in a student play. I was a huge hit, and became an actor used by graduate students in their scenes." That led to a 1966 performance in "Man With a Flower in His Mouth," Rauh's first paying part.

He performed at Chatham College and Carnegie Mellon, at the same time that his mother was still "acting at the Playhouse. There was talk of us being in the same play, but we were never in a production together," he sighs.

In 1968, Rauh was at another crossroads: to finish his dissertation or take a job at the Playhouse, to run the Film Repertory Series. He dropped the dissertation.

At the same time, Rauh did his first performance at The Little Lake Theater. "In the summer of 1969 David Disney let me do a part in 'The Star Spangled Girl.' He took quite a risk, having never seen me act. But I got through it."

In the late 60's, the Playhouse changed hands. Facing financial difficulties, the theater was taken over by Point Park College, which started an equity company of actors.

Rauh himself got involved with Actor's Equity in 1972, during a run of "How The

Other Half Loves." That was followed by "You Can't Take It With You," and then the show in which Rauh made his mark, Woody Allen's "Play It Again, Sam."

"That was my first leading role," smiles Rauh, "and one of my favorites."

Another favorite: "Chuckles the Chipmunk" in "A Thousand Clowns."

Throughout the 1970s, Rauh was a fixture at Little Lake, the Plaza Theater, Playhouse and Chatham, where he directed his first show. He began teaching acting in 1975, and took a position as the Pittsburgh Playhouse film repertory director, which he held from 1979 to 1994.

Rauh found time to act, too, during the 1980s at Little Lake and the Playhouse in such productions as "Send Me No Flowers," "The Last of the Red Hot Lovers," and another favorite, "Little Shop of Horrors."

Helen Rauh died in 1993. Unfortunately, she did not live to see her son get his biggest

roles, as "Boolie" in "Driving Miss Daisy," at the Playhouse in 1994, and in the Upstairs Theater's "The Sisters Rosenzweig." She also didn't see Rauh become a freelance drama reviewer for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

A recent highlight came in 1996 at Heinz Hall, in a special performance of "Of Thee I Sing." He was backed up by the PSO "and the Mendelsson Choir. It doesn't get much better than that," smiles Rauh.

"And Gershwin has special meaning in my family." That's because the composer was good friends with Rauh's father. He came to Rauh's grandmother's Bartlett Street house in 1934, after a performance at the Syria Mosque.

There Gershwin and Oscar Levant enthralled visitors with a two-piano performance.

"Gershwin broke four keys," Rauh beams. "He and Levant were having such a good time, they both missed their train back to New York."

In 1998, Rauh landed another plum role, in Samuel Beckett's "Krapp's Last Tape."

"I got rave reviews," Rauh smiles. "It was, up to this point, the best thing I've ever done in my life."

Though he's presently not cast, it won't be long before Pittsburghers see Rauh again. He's done commercials and movies, and has a reputation as a fine film and drama teacher at Chatham, Robert Morris, and Point Park College.

Rauh's also been involved philanthropically, helping to memorialize his family through gifts to such places as the O'Reilly Theater, Carnegie Mellon University's studio theater, the Symphony and the University of Pittsburgh.

He's been generous to the Jewish community as well, funding the Richard E. Rauh Jewish Archives and the Richard E. Rauh Oral History Fund of the National Council of Jewish Women.

"I do it," he explains, "because it's the right thing to do. My family's heritage in this city deserves a little recognition. I wanted for my family to still have some visibility." With Richard E. Rauh in town, that won't be too difficult.



Richard E. Rauh

photo credit

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COLLEGE SAVINGS PLANS VS. UTMA ACCOUNTS



K. Sidney Neuman

Our series has focused on §529 College Savings Plans. Since many have invested for college through Uniform Transfers to Minors Act (UTMA) accounts, we offer here a quick comparison between

the two vehicles.

Transfers to UTMA accounts and §529 Plans are completed gifts in the eyes of the IRS. Moreover, since funds are available for immediate use, both qualify for application of the annual exclusion. Section 529 Plans, however, allow contributions of \$50,000 in one year (or \$100,000 if married) with application of the annual exclusion over the next 5 years.

Control is often another issue for donors. Although donors want to decrease the size of their estates, many worry, regardless of their net worth, that one day the money might be needed for their own support. With UTMA accounts, grandparents can be custodians of the account and control the investments. However, the gift cannot be retracted, and when the beneficiary reaches 21, the account is distributed to the beneficiary.

Admittedly, §529 Plans do not provide the investment control that UTMA accounts do. However, §529 Plans do permit donors to withdraw the funds for the cost of income tax and a 10% penalty on the accumulations. The donor of a §529 Plan can also change the beneficiary and roll the plan into another state's plan.

Income tax issues are important when comparing both vehicles. Section 529 Plans are deferred tax investments with no payment of income tax until funds are distributed. Even then, all gain is taxed at the student's ordinary income rate. UTMA accounts are not tax-deferred. Each year, the UTMA account is taxed on ordinary income, short and long-term capital gains at the respective rates. From birth until age 14, both ordinary income and capital gain are taxed at the parents' maximum rates while from 14 to 21 the income is taxed at the beneficiary's generally lower rates.

Let's assume that today's average cost of room, board and tuition at a private 4-year college is \$30,000 per year, with college costs increasing by 3% annually. In 18 years, the annual cost of college will be \$51,000. Assuming a 10% rate of return, an annual contribution of \$3,550 will provide a college education in 18 years. Reduce the \$3,550 by the income taxes due annually, however, and the yearly contribution isn't enough. And if §529 Plan distributions become tax-free for qualified education expenses in the near future, it certainly looks like the way to save. ©2000 RFGF

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