



Regis Philbin Transcript 4/26/06

MICHAEL EISNER:

So Regis the reason I wanted you to come on my show is I need to learn how to do what you do. Do you're here to explain to me how you do this, how you prepare, how you did it, how you went from San Diego to running the world, how you became the best friend of everybody--

REGIS PHILBIN:

Ha

MICHAEL EISNER:

--how you remembered their names. Come-- I mean the whole thing.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Oh-oh that's a lot. You know-- Michael I never knew when I was a page right here in this studio and-- and downstairs on the Sixth Floor-- I-- I never knew what I wanted to do. I never thought I had any talent and it wasn't until I saw Jack Parr one night when I was working in radio in San Diego, California that I said, "You know I have a chance to do what he did."

He would come out and sit on the edge of the desk and just talk into the camera and tell them where he had been, what he had done that night-- all that--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Were you a page on his show?

REGIS PHILBIN:

No I wasn't. I was a page at my first job-- for NBC was a page on the "Tonight Show." Steve Allen was hosting--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Oh right.

REGIS PHILBIN:

--the show. That really goes back and--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Did you-- I gave tick-- I gave those-- dinner reservations for Johnny Carson to the guests that won the little song--

REGIS PHILBIN:

Oh is that right?

MICHAEL EISNER:

Yes.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Oh no kidding yeah.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Right here. Right here.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Well that was be-- little bit before you though. Steve Allen did it from the-- the theater on 44th Street. And I was in the second balcony and I was watching them kinda rehearse and my God you know that stable of talent Steve Allen had, Bill Dana, Louie Nye, Tom Poston.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Did you wanna replace them?

REGIS PHILBIN:

St-- Steve and Edie. No. But I said to myself, "What talent do I have? These are the most talented people I had ever seen.

MICHAEL EISNER:

That's what you said to me before we started. What talent do you have?

REGIS PHILBIN:

Exactly.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Why are you doing this?

REGIS PHILBIN:

No-oh I didn't say that. I know what that's like to have to answer that question. Anyway that's how I started and when I saw Jack Parr-- later on I figured you know they-- I had a shot because I thought I could do what Jack did.

MICHAEL EISNER:

And then you-- with a side kick to Joey Bishop.

REGIS PHILBIN:

And then I had a decision to make. I-- Joey called me and I was doin' my own show in Hollywood.

MICHAEL EISNER:

And you had to be a straight man to a comedian?

REGIS PHILBIN:

Yes he picked on me. I was like-- I was like his Gelman.

MICHAEL EISNER:

But did you like-- somebody told me once that you walked off in a huff. Didn't come back for a couple days.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Matter of fact I did.

MICHAEL EISNER:

But that's not your personality.

REGIS PHILBIN:

No but I was-- I was very angry because the show was off to a slow start and ABC executives and I think you were one of them.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I was too low.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Hello.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I was too low. I was--

REGIS PHILBIN:

I-- I know--

MICHAEL EISNER:

--getting their laundry.

REGIS PHILBIN:

I know you--

MICHAEL EISNER:

I was getting their dry cleaning.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Okay.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I didn't.

REGIS PHILBIN:

But he-- I had heard that maybe they were saying Regis was the wrong-- announcer for Joey. Well all Regis did was, "Here's Joey,"
Anyway-- I heard that and kept hearing it in the hallway and finally one night said, "I think I'm wrong for you."
So I said to Joey, "I'm going to leave." And I left.

MICHAEL EISNER:

But you came back two days later.

REGIS PHILBIN:

I came back a-- a week later.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Did they beg you?

REGIS PHILBIN:

They requested--

MICHAEL EISNER:

They pay you more?

REGIS PHILBIN:

No they didn't pay me any more but they requested it.

MICHAEL EISNER:

So what'd you say when you came back? "I had a stomach ache. The dog ate my homework?"

REGIS PHILBIN:

No Joey had talked about what had happened and-- Joey summed it up very succinctly that-- that night. He said that, "I was expecting a little more than this," but he said simply, "All's well that ends well." What?

MICHAEL EISNER:

And you're back.

REGIS PHILBIN:

And I'm back. So--

MICHAEL EISNER:

All right so ABC then replaced Joey with Dick Cavett.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Yeah. I started *AM Los Angeles*.

MICHAEL EISNER:

And it became a giant hit--

REGIS PHILBIN:

In all the s--

MICHAEL EISNER:

--based on those fabulous opening conversations that I'm trying to mimic right, right now.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Well the-- the host chat is the-- the-- you know the bellwether of the show.

MICHAEL EISNER:

But you created that. That's unique.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Yes I created that, because that's what I learned from Jack Parr.

MICHAEL EISNER:

And seven years you went to like number one?

REGIS PHILBIN:

Yeah. Yeah we were number one on the la-- that was before cable. We had enormous ratings. You know and enormous-- numbers.

MICHAEL EISNER:

And then you came to New York and you were number one?

REGIS PHILBIN:

Then they came to New York in 1983.

MICHAEL EISNER:

In -- 18 years of-- which I think I was one of the people that put it into syndication--

REGIS PHILBIN:

That's right. You did.

MICHAEL EISNER:

--your show.

REGIS PHILBIN:

When-- When Disney bought ABC we went syndicated with this.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Was Cindy Garvey your co-host when she was in the middle of the scandals or whatever she was having an affair with somebody or whatever. What was that or--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Or do I have that-- the wrong co-host? I can't remember. Something happened with her. Her husband was a first baseman for the-- for the Dodgers.

REGIS PHILBIN:

For the Los Angeles Dodgers. Well they-- they-- they separated.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Something was going' on.

REGIS PHILBIN:

They broke up and-- she came to New York and she was here when I came back.

MICHAEL EISNER:

So you have something' to talk about in your conversations.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Right. So ABC thought it would be good if we were paired again. We had done the show together in Los Angeles.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Is that the key that-- to be paired with somebody who has--

REGIS PHILBIN:

Well--

MICHAEL EISNER:

--marital trouble?

REGIS PHILBIN:

--no, no not at all.

MICHAEL EISNER:

No?

REGIS PHILBIN:

No that-- that's--

MICHAEL EISNER:

You have a history of that.

REGIS PHILBIN:

But that's pre--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Not your marital trouble.

REGIS PHILBIN:
No-oh. Michael.

MICHAEL EISNER:
It's not good for the show?

REGIS PHILBIN:
No. It may be good for the ratings but it's difficult on you because your feeling some empathy for that person--

MICHAEL EISNER:
Well--

REGIS PHILBIN
--who is going through a personal problem.

MICHAEL EISNER:
Now let me ask--

REGIS PHILBIN:
Of course.

MICHAEL EISNER:
--you a question. Kathy Lee had all her children while she was on the show.

REGIS PHILBIN:
Yeah.

MICHAEL EISNER:
And then when you-- Did you know Kelly Ripa was pregnant when you gave her that slot?

REGIS PHILBIN:
You know what?

MICHAEL EISNER:
Is this the key to be pregnant to come on your show?

REGIS PHILBIN:
Well it kinda sounds that way. Doesn't it? Because we-- we're trying her out on the show and we liked her a lot and we brought her over to a psychic. I psychic named Shar whom I had used--

MICHAEL EISNER:
That's not how to get pregnant.

REGIS PHILBIN:
No. But the psychic said to her, "You're pregnant." And she blushed and said, "You're right." And we didn't know about it. But anyway worked out fine. So she had a second baby and a third baby while she was co-hosting the show.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I have to admit when I was talking to Bob Iger and you were looking for a new co-host we did discuss-- it would be good if you had a co-host who was young enough to have babies 'cause you're audience is interested in--

REGIS PHILBIN:
Absolutely.

MICHAEL EISNER:
--all that.

REGIS PHILBIN:
Absolutely. And that's exactly what we've done and of course it's paid off sure.

MICHAEL EISNER:
So how do I find

REGIS PHILBIN:
You're not thinkin' about a co-host.

MICHAEL EISNER:
No, no.

REGIS PHILBIN:
You don't have room enough at this table.

MICHAEL EISNER:
This table is not big enough. All right so when you do a show like this do you-- do you go home and read the books and prepare and get yourself all ready so you know everything about the person?

R
REGIS PHILBIN:
Here's what I do Michael.

MICHAEL EISNER:
Or do you just do it?

REGIS PHILBIN:
To me what's very important is that opening segment. And so whatever I go through w-- I had dinner last night with you, talked about it today on the show. "I did a show with you today. You're probably on tomorrow's show." Whatever I experience during the day I kinda package it in my head and the next day we-- I never talked to Kelly before the show.

There are no writers on the show. I use that material to tell the audience and her what I did last night, what happened to me during the day and so-- that's what I use. Now at the end of the day they send me a little packet with the names of the guests and-- and what their-- what their up to, what their movie is about and all o' that and I take a quick look at that. But that's how I prepare.

MICHAEL EISNER:
And you never come out and say, "I have nothing to talk about this morning?" Or think you have nothing to talk about?

REGIS PHILBIN:
Well I-- I always have to come up with something because-- the-- the show relies on that first 22 minutes being spontaneous and fun. So if there's nothing in the paper that something I did maybe there's something she did you know between the three-- three of us the papers, myself and her there's always something to discuss.

MICHAEL EISNER:

And so when you did the millionaire--

REGIS PHILBIN:

Yeah.

MICHAEL EISNER:

--you-- you didn't-- you didn't have that. You just had this event kinda program.

REGIS PHILBIN:

That was a big change for because everything was scripted on that show. You know.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Was that fun 'cause that was a giant--

REGIS PHILBIN:

It was a giant hit. Yeah.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Right in the middle of the millionaire.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Yeah.

MICHAEL EISNER:

--the cable company in New York, Time Warner--

REGIS PHILBIN:

Yeah.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Took the ABC feed off the air in New York.

REGIS PHILBIN:

The outcry was great wasn't it?

MICHAEL EISNER:

The greatest thing ever to happen to ABC.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Right. So--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Because it was very badly timed by Time Warner because it was a third episode of the first time "Millionaire" was on the air.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Exactly.

MICHAEL EISNER:

And we literally had a nunnery of nuns in front of the Mayor's office with placards.

REGIS PHILBIN:

No kidding.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Because the third show was cancelled and it was--

REGIS PHILBIN:

So you one that one didn't ya?

MICHAEL EISNER:

Because of you!

REGIS PHILBIN:

Well let me--

MICHAEL EISNER:

You-- By the way I've won a lot because of you.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Really what else did you win?

MICHAEL EISNER:

Well "The Morning Show" is a--

REGIS PHILBIN:

Yeah.

MICHAEL EISNER:

"--giant hit for ABC."

REGIS PHILBIN:

Yeah.

MICHAEL EISNER:

It's just gigantic and the millionaire turned ABC around.

REGIS PHILBIN:

But let me ask you something, why did ABC put on four episodes of The Millionaire and then expect it to survive in-- in-- in-- primetime?

MICHAEL EISNER:

I'd--

REGIS PHILBIN:

Are you not--

MICHAEL EISNER:

--like to say-- I'd like to say I don't know but I was the person that made that mistake. So.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Was it because the show was so big or because we had nothing else at the time?

MICHAEL EISNER:

No. The reason was that I w-- honestly?

REGIS PHILBIN:

Yeah.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I'm now thinking of the conversation I had with Bob Iger. I had worked as a page on Jeopardy and The Price is Right and all those shows and they were still on the air.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Um-hm.

MICHAEL EISNER:

This is 40 years later.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Absolutely.

MICHAEL EISNER:

So I thought five days a week would work. And I didn't realize that something as hot as The Millionaire tired quicker than a show that was cooler like the Jep-- like Jeopardy.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Um-hm.

MICHAEL EISNER:

So we sat around it-- it was not agreed and it wasn't agreed and it wasn't out of we needed the extra programming, it was this is the way these programs work. That people like the every day demand to tune in.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Exactly.

MICHAEL EISNER:

And in-- in fact we killed it. We killed the golden goose.

REGIS PHILBIN:

But shouldn't this o' been stayed-- it shouldn't have stayed on one night a week after that?

MICHAEL EISNER:

Nobody's--

REGIS PHILBIN:

Isn't there a place for The Millionaire--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Can't we be stupid?

REGIS PHILBIN:

--on television?

MICHAEL EISNER:

Can't we be stupid? I mean we do make mistakes. We're a bunch of people sitting in a room saying, "Hey lets do this." And this was-- it wasn't about making more money, which people'll say. It wasn't about greed. It was that we thought a strip, which is every night--

REGIS PHILBIN:

Um-hm (AFF).

MICHAEL EISNER:

--across the same--

REGIS PHILBIN:

Yeah.

MICHAEL EISNER:

--time period would be successful. And the audience tired of it. And I had been trying to put on a big money game show since the \$60 Million Question.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Oh I know that. I know that. We've talk-- We talked about that years ago. You see I-- I've known Michael now well almost 40 years. All through your career, ABC then-- then Paramount Pictures.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Right.

REGIS PHILBIN:

And then Disney. I mean--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Right.

REGIS PHILBIN:

-- you've been very, very successful. You made a lot of great decisions.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Well but I had a lotta people that I work with that-- that-- that-- that-- that made all-- most of the decisions.

REGIS PHILBIN:

But now why do you wanna be a talk show host?

MICHAEL EISNER:

I don't know.

REGIS PHILBIN:

But you're enjoying it.

MICHAEL EISNER:

As I'm sitting here talking to you I'm thinking, "Maybe this is like idiotic."

REGIS PHILBIN:

But-- But-- But you were fascinated by it.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I did a Charlie Rose and Charlie said he was going on vacation. I interviewed Barry Diller and I interviewed John Travolta.

REGIS PHILBIN:

And you were pretty good.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Well they were great. They-- forget how I was. Because I knew Barry so well, Barry Diller and because I knew John Travolta so well having-- been part of the casting of Cotter and

Saturday Night Fever and Grease and Urban Cowboy and many others I was able to ask them questions that a journalist wouldn't know as much as I know.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Exactly.

MICHAEL EISNER:

And I even talked about Scientology with him and he was fabulous. And Diller was off the charts.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Um-hm (AFF.)

MICHAEL EISNER:

And we talked about a lotta stuff. So I thought this would be fun to do.

REGIS PHILBIN:

And?

MICHAEL EISNER:

But-- Well it is fun.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Well sure it's fun.

MICHAEL EISNER:

It's fun. It is fun.

REGIS PHILBIN:

You're enjoying it.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I am enjoying it. It-- It-- It's--

REGIS PHILBIN:

But-- it's-- it's-- nice that you finally got a chance to find your niche in this business.

MICHAEL EISNER:

No. You see everybody thinks they can do the show.

REGIS PHILBIN:

There are all kinds of people who can do it.

MICHAEL EISNER:

No-no. You and Oprah.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Tony Danza, Ellen--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Yeah.

REGIS PHILBIN:

--The View girls, everybody.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Yeah-yeah.

REGIS PHILBIN:

But there are a lotta people who can't do it and then sometimes it-- it's more complex than people think. You know you've got to make the guest look good first of all. That is a prerequisite. Otherwise you're not gonna get anybody on the show. But you know just let me take you back to the days here when I was a page and looking at all the talented people that I was a part of their show as a page.

MICHAEL EISNER:

So what do you-- What is your number one advice to a-- a struggling--

REGIS PHILBIN:

Well I have seen you. I've been your friend for a long time and I've seen you in both-- professional and personal situation. And now if we were negotiating my contract you would be a killer. You're a shark. That-- That you-- That's what you're trained to be. And you are.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Well--

REGIS PHILBIN:

But there's-- But when I have dinner with you or we-- we're havin' coffee or we're trapped on a plane together you tell the most charming personal funny stories of anybody I know in he business. That's what I want Michael Eisner to do with his guest.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Not the shark side.

REGIS PHILBIN:

No! Not the shark side. Unless you have to pull that shark side which you always keep in-- in re-- reserve. However you're talking with Howard Stringer. I understand that interview was terrific. And he's a very droll kinda guy and so-- but you even made him better because of your own personality. So that's what you've gotta remember to do Michael.

Don't-- Don't make it so impersonal. Make it personal. Make them feel like you know you want them to succeed. Sometimes when I am-- when I haven't met a guest who's on the show or if somebody that they tell me is very nervous I will go back stage during the commercial break, shake their hand, look 'em in the eye, just make a little funny remark to let them know that they're in good hands. That we're gonna have fun out there. You gotta do the same thing.

And don't spend much time with them before the interview begins. You know? Right down. Get started, do it. Let it all happen in the interview and don't have dinner with anybody the night before like we did last night. It kills the interview! We're dyin' here!

MICHAEL EISNER:

We're not dying and thank you for coming.

REGIS PHILBIN:

All right Michael.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Really Regis. I appreciate it.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Good luck to ya okay?

MICHAEL EISNER:

Thank you.

REGIS PHILBIN:

America's newest talk show ho-- Make me proud.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Oh Right. Right. Thanks I will.

REGIS PHILBIN:

Good luck.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Thank you.