



Honorary Degree

Nomination Form

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1. Degree to be Awarded:

 X Honorary Doctorate Honorary Baccalaureate Honorary Associate

2. Please state the name and address of your nominee for an Honorary Degree.

Mr. Jerry Lewis

3. Honorary degrees shall be awarded to persons who have made significant contributions to the improvement of the quality of academic programs and academic life at one of the NSHE's institutions. Persons currently holding public elected office are not eligible for the degree except in extraordinary circumstances.

What are your reasons for nominating this person? (Attach additional pages, if necessary.)

See attached

President Neal J. Smatresk Date
University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV)

(B/R 3/03; Added 6/05)

NOMINATION JUSTIFICATION—JERRY LEWIS

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Jerry Lewis is an American comedian, actor, film producer, writer, film director, singer and humanitarian. He is best known for his slapstick humor in stage, screen, television, radio, and recording and is also known for his charity fund-raising telethons and position as national chairman for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

Throughout his career, Mr. Lewis has supported fundraising for research into muscular dystrophy. From the early 1950s until 2011, he served as national chairman of the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). He began hosting telethons to benefit MDA in 1952. From 1966 to 2010 he hosted the annual *Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon*, renamed the *MDA Show of Strength*. The telethon has raised over \$2.6 billion.

CAREER BACKGROUND

Jerry Lewis was born Joseph Levitch on March 16, 1926, in Newark, New Jersey. His parents, Rae and Danny Lewis, were professionals in the entertainment world. His father was the 'total entertainer,' his mother played piano at New York City radio station WOR, made musical arrangements, and was her husband's musical director.

When only five years old, he made his debut in New York's Borscht Circuit singing, "Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?" By the time he was fifteen, he had perfected a comic routine, miming and silently mouthing lyrics of operatic and popular songs to a phonograph located off-stage. This was known as his "Record Act."

On July 25, 1946, Mr. Lewis began a show business partnership with Dean Martin, an association that would soon skyrocket both to fame. It started when he was performing at the 500 Club in Atlantic City and one of the other entertainers quit suddenly. Lewis, who had worked with Dean Martin at the Glass Hat in New York City, suggested him as a replacement. At first they worked separately, but then ad-libbed together, improvising insults and jokes, squirting seltzer water, hurling bunches of celery and exuding general zaniness. In less than eighteen weeks their salaries soared from \$250.00 a week to \$5,000.00.

For ten years, Martin and Lewis sandwiched sixteen money making films between nightclub engagements, personal appearances, recording sessions, radio shows, and television bookings. Their last film together was "Hollywood or Bust" (1956). On July 25th of that year the two made their last nightclub appearance together at the Copacabana, exactly ten years to the day since they became a team.

From then on, Jerry Lewis was constantly on the move. His film career skyrocketed, and he recorded several records and albums; one of them "Rock-A-Bye Your Baby with a Dixie Melody," released by Decca Records, has sold nearly four million copies to date. With increased confidence, Lewis plunged into screen writing, directing, producing as well as acting. In the spring of 1959, a contract between Paramount Pictures and Jerry Lewis Productions was signed specifying a payment of \$10 million plus 60% of the profits for 14 films over a seven year period—at that time the biggest single transaction in film history for the exclusive services of one star.

One of Mr. Lewis' lifetime loves is the game of baseball. During the 1950's and 60's he played first base with numerous professional baseball teams and trained every year with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

In 1967 Mr. Lewis became a professor at the University of Southern California, where he taught graduate students a course in film direction. "The Total Film-Maker", based on recordings of 480 hours of his classroom lectures, was edited by Mr. Lewis and published by Random House in 1971. The USC library also houses an extensive collection of his original documents relating to motion picture production.

A fact not widely known in the United States is that Mr. Lewis has won the Best Director of the Year award eight times in Europe since 1960; three in France, and one each in Italy, Belgium, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands.

One of the most successful performers in show business history, box office gross receipts of his films total about \$800 million (The majority of which when movie tickets were between 25 & 50 cents apiece.) Jerry Lewis has received worldwide acclaim for his verve, style and personality. He has a fine feel for comic rhythm and possesses the unique qualities of a great clown. His motion pictures, television shows, stage performances, recordings, radio programs, books, and personal appearances, have brought his unique humor and creativity to every corner of the globe.

He is also considered by many in the film industry to be an innovative jack-of-all trades behind the camera. In one of his most noted technical achievements, Mr. Lewis was the first director-actor to make use of a "closed circuit television preview system" (now commonly referred to as video assist) on an American feature film, with his 1960 film "The Bellboy."

Between films, the versatile and dynamic Lewis also found time to put pen to paper and produce his biography, "Jerry Lewis, In Person" a revealing portrait of the on and off-screen man, written in conjunction with Herb Gluck.

In 1990 Mr. Lewis was asked to write and direct a segment regarding children's rights for UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund). The film "Boy" that he created has become the subject of critical acclaim at film festivals around the world.

Jerry Lewis has a motto that reflects more than anything else his ongoing love affair with humanity: "I shall pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again!"

NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 1977—nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 1978—received the Jefferson Award for the "Greatest Public Service Benefiting the Disadvantaged" in special ceremonies at the Supreme Court in Washington, D. C.
- 1980—honored by the Touchdown Club of Washington, D. C. with its prestigious Hubert H. Humphrey Humanitarian Award.
- 1984—received the Boston University School of Law's prestigious Neal Pike Prize for Service to the Handicapped.
- 1984—inducted into the French Legion of Honor by presidential decree.
- 1985—presented by the Department of Defense with the highest award it can bestow upon a civilian: the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service.
- 1988—received the American debut of the "Award of Professionalism and Achievement" from the Eterna Watch Corporation.
- 1991—presented with the Comic Life Achievement Award (the "ACE" award) by the National Academy of Cable Programming.
- 1991—inducted into the Broadcast Hall of Fame by the National Association of Broadcasters at the NAB convention in Las Vegas.
- 1998—received the Lifetime Achievement Award from The American Comedy Awards.
- 1999—awarded the "Golden Lion" by the Venice International Film Festival for his lifetime achievements in motion pictures.
- 2008—awarded the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award.