

Award for Lifetime Achievement Bob Rogers

THE GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT OF BOB ROGERS

by Rich Procter

Bob Rogers did not ask me to write his profile. I didn't ask him what he considers to be his greatest accomplishment. What follows is a completely subjective, wildly presumptuous, possibly career-terminating speculation on my part.

First, a review of *What Everyone Knows About Bob Rogers*. He is the Founder and Chairman of BRC Imagination Arts. He has racked up more frequent-flier miles than Buzz Aldrin pursuing, capturing and delighting clients that include NASA, Disney, General Motors, the Ford Motor Company, the Empire State Building, and the Republic of Texas. For 25 years he's been pushing his wacky "experience museum" ideas, but just recently those ideas are starting to look less wacky. For example, BRC's Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is shattering attendance expectations, and fast becoming the most studied and imitated new museum project in the world.

Awards? Yes. 250 international awards for creative excellence, two Academy Award Nominations, 11 Thea Awards for Outstanding

Achievement in themed entertainment, and the NASA Public Service Medal.

As a teenager, Bob worked at the Magic Shop on Main Street in Disneyland, where he learned an important secret about our industry. *"I thought my job was to be magical – to have the audience be impressed. Wrong! I learned that our job in this industry is to show guests how they can be magical – how they can be the star, and can share that magic with each other."*

At Walt Disney Imagineering, Bob helped create a show for EPCOT called "Impressions of France." This show opened when EPCOT opened in 1982, and it is still playing 24 years later. Bob credits the benevolent mentorship of Marty Sklar with helping him transition



to the private sector with three shows for the General Motors "World of Motion" EPCOT Pavilion.

One of the films Bob created for General Motors was nominated for an Academy Award. So Bob attended the Oscars, but the name in the envelope was the guy sitting next to Bob, who stomped on Bob's foot as he ran to the stage. Three years later, Bob was nominated again, this time for "Rainbow War," a film he'd created for the 1986 Vancouver World's Fair. It was déjà vu. Again, the winner was sitting right next to Bob. Again, the winner stomped on Bob's foot.

The Vancouver World's Fair was also where Bob invented Holavision, which he used for the hit of the Expo, "Spirit Lodge." As I was preparing this article, many of you asked me to get Bob to reveal the secret of the Holavision process that astounded visitors not just at "Spirit Lodge," but also at "Mystery Lodge" at Knott's Berry Farm, and "Ghosts of the Library" at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois. Here it is: Bob says the process of magical conjuring was entrusted to him by a "Swami Theawarda," legendary Far East Mystic of



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Rich Procter is Senior Writer for BRC Imagination Arts. He continues to insist that he had nothing to do with the writing of this article (especially the parts that Bob Rogers might object to). He (Rich) intends to find out who is using his name, and pummel that person forthwith.

the 14th century. Elves, sprites, gnomes and banshees conjure miraculous visions and astounding phenomena that baffle science even as they amuse, astound, boggle and bewilder audiences the world over, including the Crowned Heads of Europe. (Apparently, some mirrors are involved as well.)

In the early 1990s, Bob Rogers & Company became BRC Imagination Arts. Some of America's most prestigious companies, state governments and museums have become BRC clients. This has caused Bob's wife Karen to unsuccessfully attempt to upgrade his wardrobe, and tone down his irreverent sense of humor. He has, however, kept his perspective about the business, which is always some variation on making a quarter vanish, pulling it out of a guest's ear, feigning amazement, and then asking the guest how he did that. As Bob himself says, "It's not rocket science... unless you're dealing with NASA."

What Everyone May Not Know About Bob Rogers – he is a devoted husband to his wife Karen, a proud father to his two children, Whitney and John, and now a gushing, permissive grandparent to Elsa. Bob – a man who supervises some of the most talented artisans and craftsmen in the world – was kicked out of 6th grade "wood shop" for "craft incompetence." He is a champion of the Ryman Arts program, giving his time and expertise to help nudge young adults toward a life in the arts.

So what is his greatest accomplishment? Is it BRC's lobby full of ceremonial bric-a-brac and dust bunny collectors? I don't think so.

Is it his perseverance? The fact that he kept BRC going for almost a year back in the '80s with no jobs, keeping his staff together on pure optimism conjured from rumors, vague promises and wishful thinking? Nah. He was just too stubborn to quit.

In my humble opinion, Bob's greatest accomplishment is that he has achieved *happiness*. To be in Bob's presence is to be in the company of a happy man doing what he loves, using every bit of his talent to realize projects that generate real, measurable value in the world. That is as rare as a tame polar bear.

That's not to say Bob doesn't have his cranky moments. (I, personally, would never claim to have experienced one of these, but BRC old-timers discuss them in hushed tones in the lunchroom.)

Perhaps Bob stumbled on the "real secret," as revealed by Albert Schweitzer – "Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."

Or maybe he's just too stubborn to quit.

