

Red Green's Smith speaks about new biography

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Canadian authors series Readings at Roselawn closed out another season with two famous hosts for the price of one; actors Mag Ruffman (Road to Avonlea, A Repair to Remember) and Steve Smith (The Red Green Show, Smith and Smith's Comedy Mill). Ruffman is also the writer of Smith's biography, *We're All in This Together: Red Green, The Man Behind the Character and Vice Versa*.

Ruffman opened explaining how she had first met Smith when she'd been hired to work with him for two years on a show he'd produced in 1986.

Twenty years later, Ruffman, having heard that The Red Green Show was coming to an end, e-mailed Smith out of the blue to ask him if she could write a book based on his thoughts, inspirations and TV comedy career.

Smith promptly e-mailed back, "No."

She pursued Smith by complimenting him on his "unusual way of looking at things."

"Sometimes you forget how truly great you are," Smith dryly quipped, to a humorous response.

Up until that point, Smith had been oddly quiet, leaving the floor open for Ruffman. But once he opened up, it was non-stop stories from Smith, each one delivered with the signature humour fans of The Red Green Show have come to expect.

Ruffman told the crowd that this was the only book reading they were doing to promote *We're All in This Together*, although they will do signings at selected Canadian Tire stores throughout Canada, where the book is being sold.

"My fans are at Canadian Tire in the morning, and the emergency room by the afternoon," Smith said.

Chain bookstores, such as Chapters, do not carry the book.

Smith said that, as a young boy, he'd learned one of his first life lessons was to have "fearless fun."

"As a boy, I had fun every day. There were no video games, no virtual reality. We had actual reality. Instead of Wii, we had us," he said.

"If I left my bike overnight at my friend's house, when I went back there the next day it was still there, and so was the house, and the friend."

It was here that the stories naturally started flowing from Smith, each one leaving audience members laughing out loud.

Learning comedy had been a matter of survival, Smith shared with the crowd.

He told of how he'd been a smallish, young man at high school, having skipped one grade and having a late birthday in the year.

At his locker on the first day of school, a 15-year-old, man-sized locker neighbour told him that if he'd wanted to, he could kill him.

"I spent the next four years making him laugh," Smith said.

"Why are Canadians so funny? We're trying to make the Americans laugh so they won't kill us."

Smith called his fan base fantastic, admitting that they'd encouraged him to keep The Red Green Show on the air when, during the second season, programmers threatened to cancel it.

"This was another life lesson for me, that the audience, the people, are boss," he said.

He recounted of how fans sent in thousands of letters everyday in an effort to keep The Red Green Show on the

air. To show his appreciation, Smith issued Possum Lodge membership cards that many still carry today.

"It's an odd show," he later added.

"It's like the flu — not everybody gets it."

Smith shared humorous moments, often at Ruffman's suggestion, from the book and The Red Green Show that included Pat McKenna as well.

When she could get a few words in edgewise, Ruffman said she'd interviewed Smith for almost three-and-a-half years for the book.

Ruffman manages her own publishing company, ToolGirl, and has published other books that include How Hard Can it Be, a guide to home improvement for beginner's. She is also a syndicated homes project columnist of ToolGirl.

Smith kept his humorous, true-life tales going for almost two hours and seemed as though he could easily continue for another two.

Another of his life's lessons he encouraged audience members to work toward was finding a sense of accomplishment in their lives.

"It's the greatest feeling. If you find out how to do that, that's one of life's greatest lessons," he said.

Readings at Roselawn series memberships were offered exclusively to members until Thursday's show.

Memberships unrenewed will now be offered to those on the waiting list for next year's season.

Anyone interested can contact membership secretary, Amber Dodd, or visit www.williamthomas.ca.

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