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Lamorinda Native Will Forte Discusses Memories and Comedy Career

By Adam Blake



Will Forte speaking at the 2015 Wondercon, for "The Last Man on Earth", at the Anaheim Convention Center in Anaheim, California.

Photo Gage Skidmore

While many Lamorinda residents go on to accomplish great things, few have achieved true fame. No one, perhaps, has reached the level of Will Forte, who grew up in Moraga and Lafayette and graduated from Acalanes in 1988. In addition to eight seasons as a cast member on "Saturday Night Live," Forte has also starred in several films, had ongoing roles on TV hits, and now writes and stars in his own show on Fox, "The Last Man on Earth."

Despite his successes, Forte has not forgotten his roots. On April 23, Forte called Acalanes High School's student publication, *Blueprint*, for a telephone interview from Sante Fe, where he was shooting on location for an upcoming film, "The Ridiculous Six."

Forte reminisced with this reporter and Acalanes senior Sam Fraser about his time growing up in Lamorinda and discussed his thriving comedy career.

"I loved growing up in Moraga and Lafayette. I was born in 1970, and I lived in Moraga until '83 then went over to Stanley in '84 and was at Stanley for eighth grade and then Acalanes for all of high school. And I loved it," he told Fraser and me. "I thought it was the perfect place to grow up. I had a great group of friends."

Similar to most high school students, at that time Forte said he had no idea what he wanted to do. "I took a drama class my sophomore year with Mr. Eggertson ... but I never did any plays," he said. "The closest I ever got to performing was we emceed the talent show, me and a couple buddies, and so we got up and we did the dumbest things. We threw out slices of cheese into the audience at some point. I forget why we even did that. But I grew up loving David Letterman, so we tried to do our own little David Letterman rip-off. That was the closest I came to performing."

Forte attended UCLA and said he thought he was going to do what his dad does: go into the financial industry. But after he started trying that out of college, "it didn't feel right," he said. "I think all along I was drawn to comedy as a viewer, and I just thought 'Why shouldn't I give it a thought?'"

"For everyone who has no idea what they want to do in high school, you are doing just fine. That's where you're supposed to be," he said. "Keep an open mind."

Forte said that his dream was always to work for SNL. After several years writing for "Letterman" and "That '70s Show" he was finally cast in SNL's 28th season at age 32.

"My goal of going into comedy was to work at SNL so it should have been such an exciting time, but I was terrified that I was going to be bad at it, and I wasn't able to live in the moment enough," said Forte. "About four or five seasons in I started to relax a little and enjoy it, and now I look back, and it's one of the greatest experiences I've ever had. I wish I could go back and have those first couple years over again and just tell my myself, 'Don't stress out just have fun,' because

I should have had a lot more fun, but I would just overthink stuff and stress out."

Forte made a name for himself outside of SNL since leaving the show after eight seasons and has played many roles in movies and TV shows. He mentioned "Nebraska" as a particular highlight. The film was nominated for six Academy Awards.

"I never thought I'd get to be in a movie like that," Forte said. "But I also got to be in 'MacGruber,' which is about as different a movie as you could get, and I'm just as proud of that movie."

Outside of writing and acting, Forte has also devoted time to helping out with several charitable organizations.

"I feel like I have been very lucky my whole life, growing up in Moraga and Lafayette, and then I got the good fortune to do this career that I always wanted to do, so why not help people that are less fortunate?" Forte said.

Steve Wampler graduated from Acalanes one year ahead of Forte and suffers from Cerebral Palsy. As a child Wampler attended a camp in the Sierras tailored for children with disabilities that had since closed. Wampler reached out to Forte about helping raise money to reopen the camp in 2002.

As a writer, philanthropist, and TV and film actor, Forte is unsure of the direction his career is headed, but with "The Last Man on Earth" scheduled for a second season and several film roles lined up, he undoubtedly will be busy.

"I've been so lucky," he said. "If it all ended and I never got another job, I'm pretty satisfied."

To read the complete interview between Forte, Blake and Fraser, visit <http://acalanesblueprint.com/2015/05/29/will-forte-picking-the-brain-of-a-comedic-genius-and-former-don/>.

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