

Canadian broadcaster Terry O'Reilly speaks at Museum of Dufferin



By Jasen Obermeyer

Canadian broadcast producer and personality, Terry O'Reilly, was at the Museum of Dufferin (MoD) this past Sunday, speaking to the audience on his life and career.

MoD was packed with fans of Mr. O'Reilly, a resident of Creemore since 2005, sitting down and hearing him speak about his extensive career.

Born in Sudbury, he graduated from Ryerson University in the radio, television and arts program. "I didn't know what I wanted to do, I knew I wanted to be in broadcast somewhere," he said.

In an interview with the Citizen, Mr. O'Reilly recalled how during high school he took an elective course on film and television, and one day in University during a lecture class, the guest speakers discussed the advertising world. "I saw in the back of the room and I saw my future. I just sat there transfixed."

He is best known as the host of the CBC Radio One series O'Reilly on Advertising, The Age of Persuasion, and most recently Under the Influence. These programs examine the cultural and sociological impact of advertising and marketing on modern life. In 1990, he launched his own advertising production company, Pirate Radio and Television.

He has also published two books, The Age of Persuasion: How Marketing Ate Our Culture in 2009, and This I Know: Marketing Lessons from Under The Influence, in 2017, which he said he enjoyed very much for its freedom. "Here was a chance not to be constricted by time."

Mr. O'Reilly described advertising as a puzzle, a form of strategy. "I love trying to figure out a way to position a company in its category, how to figure out how to beat the competition."

He added that persuasion is an art form because of its creativity, and if done right, can do great things. "You have to try and bring a selling idea to a product that's impossible to ignore, and that's really hard to do."

He noted his love for podcasts is their ability to reach an international audience, pointing how he gets emails from listeners around the world, including Germany, Australia, Israel, and South America. "It's astounding to me when I look at the emails and see where they're coming from."

Mr. O'Reilly has created campaigns for many brands in the country, including Labatt, Molson, Pepsi USA, Goodyear Tires, Tim Hortons, Volkswagen, Nissan, the Hudson's Bay Company, and Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

"I worked with a lot of great clients over the years," he remarked. "It all came down to the client who was making the decision."

He has also worked with several actors and actresses, including Alec Baldwin, Ellen DeGeneres, Kiefer Sutherland, Bob Newhart, Martin Short, Drew Carey, and William Shatner. "I always enjoyed working with celebrities."

When discussing the changes in advertising, Mr. O'Reilly explained that it was all because of digital technology. "That changed everything, because you could reach people in very quick ways, you can reach a lot of people for not a lot of money." He said though that it makes advertising more easily tracked, as you know instantly how many people are buying a product or visiting a website.

Asked on what is install for the future, he said he would like to eventually write another book, and is in the "planning stages" of taking the show on the road.